REPORT RESUMES

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ROUGHING IT. THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA. SHORT STORIES. POEMS.
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A TEACHER VERSION OF A LITERATURE CURRICULUM GUIDE WAS PROVIDED FOR TWAIN'S "ROUGHING IT," HEMINGWAY'S "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA," FOUR SHORT STORIES, AND 20 LYRIC POEMS. THE SHORT STORIES INCLUDED WERE (1) "THE MONKEY'S PAW" BY W.W. JACOBS, (2) "PAUL'S CASE" BY WILLA CATHER, (3) "THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO" BY POE, AND (4) "HAIRCUT" BY RING LARDNER. GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER AND CLASS WERE LAID DOWN UNDER THE HEADINGS OF SUBJECT, FORM, AND POINT OF VIEW. DISCUSSION OF EACH WORK WAS INITIATED THROUGH THESE GUIDELINES. EACH WORK WAS EXPLAINED AND APPROPRIATE LITERARY CONCERNS WERE POINTED OUT AND EXPANDED FOR POSSIBLE CLASSROOM DISCUSSION. THE STUDENT VERSION IS ED 010 811. RELATED REPORTS ARE ED 010 129 THROUGH ED 010 160 AND ED 010 803 THROUGH ED 010 832. (GD)

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ROUGHING IT
THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA
SHORT STORIES
POEMS

Literature Curriculum III
Teacher Version

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NOVEL: Roughing It

Literature Curriculum III

Teacher Version

Teacher Version

ROUGHING IT

Preface

The recommended text of Mark Twain's Roughing It is the Signet Classic edition (CT 143) edited by Leonard Kriegel. The 8-page Foreword will serve as a very useful supplement to the study guides for both teachers and students.

Although long works are recommended for ninth-grade study as a matter of principle (see second paragraph of the following discussion), only the first forty-one chapters of this book should be assigned, and those probably not for all students. These chapters carry the protagonist through his mining experiences. In the forty-second chapter he is finally cured of the gold fever and turns to newspaper work, beginning--although he did not then know it--the career of "Mark Twain." Some editions of the work divide it into two parts, the break coming between these two chapters.

It is of course understood that reading even the first half of the book will not be feasible for all students. Some sequences can be skipped without doing too much damage to the work's coherence: for instance the Mormon phase of the narrative, Chapters XII-XVII (inclusive), about 30 pages; and Chapters XXV-XLI, constituting the last 26 pages, may also be sacrificed. Other adjustments dictated by necessity can be effected by the teacher. The work's episodic structure means of course that many chapters and even episodes within chapters have independent integrity and can be read as tales or short stories. One example is Chapter XXXIV, the story of General Buncombe and the Great Landslide Case.

It must also be understood that any attempt to deal in class with the whole work (meaning always in this context the first forty-one chapters) will be self-defeating. It will be best to focus class discussion, as the guide does, upon a selection of chapters or episodes which the teacher thinks his particular class will find especially interesting or amusing and which may also be especially useful in furthering an understanding of the book's distinctive characteristics. It is hoped that the passages given special consideration in the following pages may serve as a guide in making such a selection. They are all identified by chapter number.

Detailed questions about most of the chapters are supplied in the "student version." Some students may be invited to consider all of them outside class, but, again, no attempt should be made to attend to all of them in class. Certainly they should not be followed slavishly. Many teachers will wish to use them primarily as suggestions upon which to base questions of their own, many of which, it is hoped, will grow naturally out of the discussion which follows.

1. General:

The ninth grade is in a sense a "senior" year for the junior high school student. He is moving toward the end of the second phase of his school life and, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, has some sense of his increasing maturity. He is continuing to grow physically and may now stand a head taller than those "freshmen" in the seventh grade. He feels ready for new challenges in the gym and on the playground and is likely to be given more responsibilities than before in the extracurricular life of the school. The tasks set in the classroom should be of such a nature as to suggest clearly and immediately that mentally he is also now a head taller. They should be made to relate to and build upon what has gone before--deliberately and explicitly; but both the materials selected for study and the approach to the materials should be sufficiently different to furnish dramatic evidence of progress.

A simple way of doing this in the ninth grade study of literature is to give increased attention to longer works: the full-length play, the long poem, the book, the epic. They carry special challenges of sustained attention. They are likely to offer more difficult problems of structure and style (form) and to raise more complex questions of theme and point of view. They also by their very weight and substance are likely to lodge themselves more firmly in the memory, to become more enduring possessions in the growing stock of the mind.

Part One of Mark Twain's fictionalized autobiographical fragment, Roughing It, is one of the works in this broad category selected for ninth-grade study. Because it is the simplest of the longer works recommended, and because it is so clearly shaped around the "journey" theme to be given special emphasis in this year, it should probably be assigned immediately after the "General Orientation" unit.

2. Roughing It: What is it?

Roughing It might be defined as a book by Mark Twain about a young adventurer named Samuel Clemens, who, at the age of 26, after his prospective career as a Mississippi River steamboat pilot (he had also learned the printing trade) was terminated by the outbreak of the Civil War, set out from Missouri by overland stage to seek his fortune in the mine fields of the Territory of Nevada; failed at that; and then instead of striking it rich as a prospector discovered "Mark Twain" and struck it rich at that. If this definition were entirely accurate, the book could be called an autobiography, or the fragment of one; but it isn't entirely accurate. In the first place, the narrator, the "autobiographer," remains anonymous throughout Part One: we hear his voice (which of course has a distinctive tone) and we are told about what he wears and eats and thinks and feels and he is given a "local habitation"--but no name; and his brother, who makes the trip with him, is always referred to simply as that, or as my brother the Secretary, with perhaps an occasional embellishment--"I was private secretary to his majesty the Secretary." The fraternal relationship, however, which in a true autobiography would be given life and meaning, hardly exists in the book. Furthermore, the narrator himself, whoever he is, can hardly be Sam Clemens. "I was young and ignorant," he announces on the first page. "I had never been away from home." But Sam Clemens of Hannibal, Mo., by the time he was 19 had worked in St. Louis, New York City, and Philadelphia as journeyman printer and had come to full disciplined maturity in the course of his succeeding four years as steamboat pilot on the St. Louis-New Orleans run. "Young and ignorant"? Those four years have been called his university. "When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography," Mark Twain wrote many years later, "I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before--met him on the river." There is, then, a considerable psychological difference between the real Sam Clemens as he was in 1861 and the narrator who introduces himself in the first chapter of Roughing It, and the book is not, strictly speaking, an autobiography What is it?

This can be one of the guiding questions for the class discussions, and the method used in trying to answer it can be made to relate to the exercises in definition used in the Eighth Grade. Guide lines for teacher and class will be laid down in the following pages under the familiar headings of Subject, Form, and Point of View. The book is of course a mixed form which Mark first brought into being in the enormously successful Innocents Abroad, published in 1869, three years before the appearance of Roughing It in 1872 (Innocents had sold 100,000 copies by the latter date; it took ten years for Roughing It to reach that mark). The western book is a blend of fact ("there is quite a good deal of information in the book. I regret this very much. . .") and fantasy, the fantasy usually shpaed by the controlling genius of Mark's humor of exaggeration, to which students were introduced in the Seventh Grade "General Orientation Unit," when they read "The Genuine Mexican Plug," taken from the 24th chapter of Roughing It (see Teacher's Version, GOU, pp. 11-16--many of the questions found there can be adapted to the present unit).

As "travel literature," Roughing It can be usefully associated with the purely fictional narrative of John Russell's "The Price of the Head" (the journey as self-discovery), also used in the Seventh Grade General Orientation Unit, and the selections from the factual Kon-Tiki and Lindbergh's We read in the Eighth Grade (definition by comparison and contrast). The story of the coyote and the town dog in the 5th chapter is a modern version of the beast fable, and the Tenderfoot-Old Timer theme is an important element in the folk *mythology* of the American West. The idyllic "camping out" experience of Chapter XXIII has its ancient archetypes in the Eden of the Book of Genesis and the *Golden Age* of classical mythology (see "A Book of Myths," Grade Seven, pp. 3-4, to be quoted in part below.) Such references as these can be used to further the purposes of the *spiral curriculum*, and will at the same time provide students with a means of measuring their own developing maturity.

3. *Subject, Form, and Point of View: Preliminary Remarks*

The book is "about" three journeys, one long, two short. The first carries the narrator by stagecoach from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Carson City, Nevada. The year is 1861, eight years before the completion of the first transcontinental railroad (see the New York *Times* story on the luxury of rail travel at the end of Chap. IV). It is a journey through *space* (1700 miles) and *time* (20 days), the two kinds of measurement becoming almost interchangeable as the journey stretches out. This excursion ends at the start of Chap. XXI. The others are relatively short ones into the country around Carson City, the first to stake out a claim on some timber land (the 22nd and 23rd chapters), the second into the mine fields, motivated by the gold fever (Chap. XXVI to the end of Part One). Each of these three phases of the book is a more-or-less self-contained unit and could be read independently of the other two. All three journeys are significant aspects of the history of the American West. This is a tentative approach to *subject.*

The book's *form*, like that of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, is determined by the subject, the "adventures of the road," with the western trail here replacing (or anticipating) Huck's river, stagecoach substituting for raft. The incidents of the *story* are provided by the chances of the trip. Things happen to the "hero," he does not make them happen. He is at the mercy of the trail, the country, and the weather. No event has any *necessary* connection with the event immediately preceding it. This kind of narrative form is called *episodic*.

It could also be said, however, that if the "hero" seems to be at the mercy of chance, the story and the form are to some extent at the mercy of the creative whim of the author; or that if the *form* is determined by (and hardly distinguishable from) the *subject* which is the journey, behind both stands the determining control of the author and the *point of view*.

The point of view is double. At times it seems simply to be that of the hero, the naive tenderfoot from the East, the "town dog," an Outsider. At other times the perspective is that of the Old Timer he becomes as a result of the journey, the Insider who obviously feels superior to the tenderfoot General Buncombe of Chap. XXXIV ("The Great Landslide Case"). This double point of view, then, actually works back upon the *subject* by providing it with one of its themes (the abstract aspect of the concrete events): the physical journey from East to West is also a "spiritual" journey from innocence into experience, the story of an initiation by ordeal into full manhood, into membership in the Tribe of Old Timers.

Although these various aspects of the book must be treated separately in the following discussion and in the classroom, it should be emphasized that they are functionally interrelated, giving the work a kind of organic unity that counters the episodic looseness of its form.

4. Subject: Hero, Motive, and Theme

The hero of either a biography or a piece of fiction is understood in very large part in terms of what makes him tick: his motivation, which is nearly always multiple. The hero's motivation is usually the same as the motivation of the action or plot of novel, play, or epic. It may be announced in plain terms or it may be withheld in the interest of suspense, as it is in "The Price of the Head." The several motives of the hero and his journeys in Roughing It are announced in plain terms. There is first the simple envy of the older brother, which is a combination of the materialistic--

> I coveted his distinction and his financial splendor --

and the romantic--

> --but particularly and especially the long, strange journey he was going to make, and the curious new world he was going to explore.

The two impulses, the dream of romantic adventure and the dream of wealth, at first seem contradictory, but actually they probably support each other. Much later in the book, headed for the mining country after being bitten by the gold bug, there is time along the way for the hero to reintroduce quite naturally the romantic motive, this time deepening and universalizing it by reference to the "nomadic instinct." This journey like the journey west was hard and toilsome, but it had its bright side. Camping

> is a kind of life that has a potent charm for all men, whether city or country bred. We are descended from desert-lounging Arabs, and countless ages of growth toward perfect civilization have failed to root out of us the nomadic instinct.

This is a reflection of the deep longing for a life of freedom and irresponsibility which the restrictions of "perfect civilization" probably intensifies, the impulse that compels Huck Finn to "strike out for the territory" (Nevada, perhaps?) at the end of his narrative. And the dream of wealth perhaps serves the dream of escape because of the innocent notion that money can buy freedom.

The two dreams or motives relate directly to the book's central theme or idea. The initiation into the adult community, growing up, although it has its compensations, even perhaps superior satisfactions, is also necessarily a process of disillusionment in which the dream is destroyed by reality. The theme probably is given its most perfect treatment artistically in Chapter V, in the story of the coyote's education of the town dog, who at the start of the chase is "full of encouragement and worldly ambition," but after the lesson returns to the train

> and takes up a humble position under the hindmost wagon, and feels unspeakably mean, and looks ashamed, and hangs his tail at half-mast for a week. And for as much as a year after that, whenever there is a great hue and cry after a coyote, that dog will merely glance in that direction without emotion, and apparently observe to himself, 'I believe I do not wish any of the pie.'

The town dog has become an adult the hard way--and there probably isn't any other way.

The hero has many such experiences, one in the 18th chapter. About to cross the alkali desert in daylight, he anticipates:

> This was fine--novel--romantic--dramatically adventurous. . .
> We would write home all about it.

But

> this enthusiasm, this stern thirst for adventure, wilted under the sultry August sun [the sun's light is a traditional symbol for truth] and did not last above one hour. . . The poetry was all in the anticipation--there is none in the reality.

So also with the dream of wealth. The hero records his feeling of ecstasy when hunting for gold in the region of the Humboldt:

> Of all the experiences of my life, this secret search among the hidden treasures of silver-land was the nearest to unmarred ecstasy. It was a delirious revel. By and by, in the bed of a shallow rivulet, I found a deposit of shining yellow scales, and my breath almost forsook me! A gold-mine, and in my simplicity I had been content with vulgar silver! I was so excited that I half believed my overwrought imagination was deceiving me.'

He carries his nugget of "gold" back to camp and for a while keeps his precious secret. Finally he shows it to *his* coyote, "old Ballou"--"cast your eye on *that*, for instance, and tell me what you think of it." The nugget is subjected to the rays of the sun of truth.

> . . . Then old Ballou said:
>
> 'Think of it? I think it is nothing but a lot of granite rubbish and nasty glittering mica that isn't worth ten cents an acre.'
>
> So vanished my dream. So melted my wealth away. So toppled my airy castle to the earth and left me stricken and forlorn.

The hero's tail is at half-mast. Such moments can be destructive; but paradoxically, the lessons they teach are a condition of survival in the human world. It is not until the hero has undergone the ordeals of disillusionment, has suffered the discipline of the real, that he is finally qualified as an adult to recognize his good fortune in being offered the city editorship of the Virginia City *Enterprise* at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week (Part Two, Chap. I). It was during that apprenticeship (the third or fourth for young Sam Clemens) that he became "Mark Twain" (it was a river term, a "sounding," meaning about twelve feet deep). It was a dramatic transformation (although it did not come overnight). "Mark Twain" became a very wealthy man.

5. Subject: the Material

We have defined the subject of *Roughing It* in terms of the book's main *narrative line* (journey), its *hero* (the tenderfoot), and its *theme* (innocence-experience, illusion-reality). These are more or less *abstract* ways of defining the subject. As we read, page by page, through this or any other narrative, however, we experience its subject not abstractly but *concretely*. Description gives us specific landscapes, particular characters, beasts, houses, roads and streets, etc. *Monologue* and *dialogue* make us hear speech and recognize different speech mannerisms, by means of which *characterization* is developed. *Incident* provides action and also adds to information about the country and the way of life there. These things can be referred to as the book's *material*, and it is the material that first engages our attention and interest and keeps us reading.

Where does the author get his material? Its *source* is of course his total experience, his human relationships, his travel, the places he has lived and the clothes he has worn, the books he has read, the stories he has heard, and the history in which he has necessarily participated. The source, that is, of any book's material is *memory*. The world of memory in familiar metaphor is a storehouse, and a very disorderly storehouse for most of us. The writer brings order to it through selection and verbal transmutation.

The ordered material of Roughing It can be thought of as a mixture of fact and fantasy. Fantasy can be thought of as fact not only ordered but transformed in such a way that it may seem to resemble dream more than reality, while at the same time it is felt as somehow true--true to one aspect of our mental life. The recroding of fact on the page suggests history. Fantasy is clearly fiction--fiction pushing its way as far beyond history as it seems possible to go. Fact is Lindbergh on the subject of his trans-Atlantic flight. Fantasy is "The Price of the Head."

Roughing It is an extraordinary amalgamation of the materials of fact and the materials of fantasy. Oddly enough, the fantastic materials have a source in the historical experience: the anecdote, the tall tale, the oral literature of the American frontier. Thus Mark's mixture of fact and fantasy in this book is true in a special way.

In the ironic "Prefatory" remarks, he apologizes for the information in the book--"information concerning an interesting episode in the history of the Far West." Information is provided, certainly; but fact and fantasy are constantly played off against each other, and they are sometimes blended in such a way as to doom to failure any attempt to separate the ingredients.

Fact is good and necessary in both literature and life, but in the former fantasy may sometimes be felt as superior. The proposition is offered in the footnote that comes at the end of Chapter XX. A kind of fantasy appears in that chapter in the four-times-repeated (always verbatim) Horace Greeley story, "that tiresome old anecdote" that sapped the hero's strength, undermined his constitution, and withered his life. The footnote records the author's final exasperation:

> And what makes that worn anecdote the more aggravating is that the advwnture it celebrates never occurred. If it were a good anecdote, that seeming demerit would be its chiefest virtue, for creative power belongs to greatness; but what ought to be done to a man who would wantonly contrive so flat a one as this? If I were to suggest what ought to be done to him, I should be called extravagant--but what does the sixteenth chapter of Daniel say? Aha!

Why the derisive guffaw at the end? The Book of Daniel has only twelve chapters. Fantasy will out.

6. The Material: Fact

The ultimate source is history.

What Americans call the "Westward Movement" was really the climactic phase of a great migration that began when the first English colonists faced the hardships and dangers of the Atlantic crossing in the early 17th century. From the time of the first settlements in the Massachusetts Bay and Virginia Colonies, "the West" was always geographically relative, but the compass heading was absolute: first to the thin eastern coastline, then across the Alleghenies into Tennessee and Kentucky, then on to the Ohio valley, the Middle Border, the Great Plains, and finally the Far West. The way in which the original motives--the need to escape religious persecution expressing itself under the generally hardheaded control of the economic motive--the way in which the original mixed motivation survived may be indicated by the Mormon trek (Mark's Appendix A, the sympathetically indignant "Brief Sketch of Mormon History," is generally accurate). Farms, timber, fur, cattle, and finally gold and silver are probably the best-known of the specific goals, and they represent, in spite of the Mormon experience, a shift of primary emphasis from the spiritual to the material quest. To the extent that the spiritual quest survived it was secularized: the spirit of religion was replaced by the spirit of adventure, to which Mark in his opening pages ironically pays his respects. The movement quickly developed its own literature of "travel," and *Roughing It* is the somewhat eccentric and irreverent cousin of such sober contributions to the genre as the genteel Washington Irving's *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) and the near-classic, *The California and Oregon Trail* (1849) by the patrician Harvard man Francis Parkman. The eastern market was flooded by the work of lesser men, like the Professor Thos. J. Dimsdale from whose work, *The Vigilantes of Montana*, Mark quotes at length on the history of the violent Slade in Chapter XI. History of course is much more than fact, but the material of fact is its foundation.

The material of fact demands its own kind of prose: the *prose of fact*. It employs a language of measurement--measurement of space, time, money, weight; a language of quantities, of shapes, colors, names.

> We were approaching the end of our long journey. It was the *morning* of the *twentieth day*. At *noon* we would reach *Carson City*, the capital of *Nevada Territory*. . . We arrived, disembarked, and the stage went on. It was a "*wooden*" town; its population *two thousand souls*. The main street consisted of *four or five blocks of little white frame stores*. . . They were *packed close together*, side by side, as if room were scarce in that mighty plain. The sidewalk was of *boards*. . . In the *middle of the town*,

> opposite the stores, was the "*plaza,*" which is native to all towns beyond the Rocky Mountains--a *large, unfenced, level vacancy,* with a *liberty pole* in it, and very useful as a place for *public auctions, horse trades,* and *mass-meetings,* and likewise *for teamsters to camp in.* Two *other sides* of the plaza were faced by *stores, offices* and *stables.*
>
> (Chapter XXI; italics supplied)

The italicized words themselves represent the ruling intention of the prose of fact, the grammar of fact. It is a prose in which the work of the verb is generally subordinated to noun-work and modifier-work. Suggestion, ambiguity, appeals to the imagination are deliberately suppressed, but the prose of fact has its own glory: the glory of absolute clarity and the "truth" about the shapes of things in the material world in which we live. It gives the reader in the most economic way possible the sense of being *there,* in the world of things and nothing but things. No dreams. The great antecedents of the modern prose of fact are to be found in the work of Daniel Defoe and that of his American contemporary Benjamin Franklin. The prose of fact is relentlessly middle-class. Mastery of the prose of fact, however, is a pre-requisite of all good writing, and it *can be taught.* There are many such passages as the one quoted above in *Roughing It,* and they provide excellent models for imitation. (Examples: the "technology" of stagecoaching in the first several chapters, especially the administrative hierarchy, Chap. VI; the description of sage-brush, III; the Mormon society, XIII-XVI; history and government of Nevada, XXV; and the mining chapters, XXVI to the end of Part I, *passim.*)

The prose of fact serves a *thematic function:* it defines in hard terms the reality by which the hero must be educated and disciplined before he can emerge from the delusions of his innocence into confident adulthood.

7. *The Material: Fantasy*

In Chapter XXI the factual description of Carson City is followed, after our brief introduction to Mr. Harris and his six-shooter, by the straight-faced description of the wind that plays over Washoe (the vernacular name for Nevada).

> This [Mr. Harris's gun-play] was all we saw that day, for it was two o'clock, now, and according to custom the daily "Washoe Zephyr" set in; a soaring dust drift about the size of the United States set up edgewise came with it, and the capital of Nevada Territory disappeared from view. Still, there were sights to be seen which were not wholly uninteresting to newcomers; for the

> vast dust-cloud was thickly freckled with things strange to the upper air--things living and dead, that flitted hither and thither, going and coming, appearing and disappearing among the rolling billows of dust--hats, chickens, and parasols sailing in the remote heavens; blankets, tin signs, sagebrush and shingles a shade lower; doormats and buffalo robes lower still; shovels and coal scuttles on the next grade; glass doors, cats, and little children on the next; disrupted lumberyards, light buggies, and wheelbarrows on the next; and down only thirty or forty feet above ground was a scurrying storm of emigrating roofs and vacant lots . . . tradition says the reason there are so many bald people there is that the wind blows the hair off their heads while they are looking skyward after their hats.

This is the kind of fantasy that clearly should escape the punishment recommended in the non-existent sixteenth chapter of Daniel; and what is first to be noted about it is that although it surely has the "virtue" of never having occurred, it nevertheless employs the method and language of the prose of fact. The "Zephyr" (defined in the dictionary as a "soft, mild wind") arrives punctually at two o'clock; it is measured ("about the size of the United States set up edgewise"); and it carries into the air exactly nineteen very ordinary things, denoted by nouns that characterize the daily life of the time and place: parasols, tin-signs, buffalo robes, coal scuttles, buggies, wheel-barrows, etc, exploded upward into the air of fantasy out of the social history of Nevada Territory in 1861. It is an eye-witness account; it must be true. Time-honored phrases ("according to custom") disarm us and help to authenticate the story. No special interest is claimed for it, the tone is momentarily deprecating: old stuff to the natives, it was "not wholly uninteresting to strangers." The only trouble is that this wind is a little too tall; a good deal taller than Paul Bunyan, certainly; as tall, indeed, as the tall tale it exemplifies. It is irrational, beyond all reason; yet it mockingly demands belief because the things are true--only their dislocation is not; and the things are reasonably organized, one might say, by the principle of avoirdupois: from hats and parasols down through doormats and little children to arrive finally at the earth itself, the soaring vacant lots.

This humor of exaggeration seems peculiarly American and probably is significantly related to the American preoccupation with size, the brag of bigness, which the size of the continent itself may have helped to stimulate. Things come bigger here, even disasters. But we would not dwell too solemnly on this thought. The charm of the "Washoe Zephyr," like the beauty of Emerson's Rhodora, is "its own excuse for being."

The dictionary, however, supplies us with two different although related definitions of fantasy: "the forming of grotesque mental images"

--that fits the "Washoe Zephyr" and Bemis's buffalo yarn (Chap. VII) and "The Great Landslide Case" (Chap. XXXIV) and all the rest of them; but the dictionary also gives us, "Psychol. an imaginative sequence fulfilling a psychological need; a daydream," and that points in another direction in the world of Roughing It.

The fantasy of the grotesque as Mark employs it is a clear-eyed parody on the truth. Its very technique furnishes a wild reminder of the crucial difference between reality and illusion. It helps to educate us in that difference. It is always controlled, willed, deliberate, sane. The fantasy, on the other hand, that fulfills a psychological need suggests compulsion. It seems almost unwilled. It may serve, automatically, a medicinal purpose in providing, like sleep, a relief from the tensions of daily life; but to return is necessary if we are to survive. Only the psychotic do not return. They cannot.

We have seen that the fantasy of unwilled illusion has a central function in the thematic structure of Roughing It. The daydreams of adventure, of great wealth, of the possession of superhuman skills (marksmanship, etc.), of escape itself, are also a part of the American experience, of the "frontier impulse." Yet the impulse behind them is also universal and has ancient origins in human history.

Mark sometimes handles this kind of fantasy seriously. One example will serve: the treatment of the timber-ranching interlude in Chapter XXIII. The movement from the real setting into the blessed ancient dream is almost imperceptible. Mark it. It is more than twelve feet deep.

> If there is any life that is happier than the life we led on our timber ranch for the next two or three weeks, it must be a sort of life which I have not read of in books or experienced in person. We did not see a human being but ourselves during the time, or hear any sounds but those that were made by the wind and the waves, the sighing of the pines, and now and then the far-off thunder of an avalanche. The forest about us was dense and cool, the sky above us was glassy and clear, or rippled and breezy, or black and storm-tossed, according to Nature's mood . . . The view was always fascinating, bewitching, entrancing. The eye was never tired of gazing, night or day, in calm or storm; it suffered but one grief, and that was that it could not look always, but must close sometimes in sleep.

Boating on the lake,

> We usually pushed out a hundred yards or so from shore, and then lay down on the thwarts in the sun, and let the boat drift by the hour whither it would. We seldom talked. It interrupted the

> Sabbath stillness, and marred the dreams the luxurious rest and indolence brought. . . So singularly clear was the water, that when it was only twenty or thirty feet deep the bottom was so perfectly distinct that the boat seemed floating in the air! . . . All objects seen through it had a bright, strong vividness. . . So empty and airy did all spaces seem below us, and so strong was the sense of floating high aloft in mid-nothingness, that we called these boat excursions 'balloon voyages.'

The prose of this fantasy is at a much farther remove from the prose of fact than that of the fantasy of the grotesque. A brief return to our earlier passage will make the contrast clear.

> It was a "wooden" town; its population two thousand souls. The main street consisted of four or five blocks of little white frame stores.

The cadences of the pastoral passage are longer, and the modifiers of measurement have given way to adjectives of sensation, words that seem to fuse the outer and inner worlds: sighing, far-off, dense, cool, brilliant, glassy, bewitching, luxurious, etc. It is a world that seems unmarred by such human ailments as fatigue--"The eye was never tired of gazing." Rest and indolence prevail. Finally, with easy skill, Mark makes the transparency of the real lake serve a symbolic and thematic function: it becomes a transparency not of water but of air, the air in which the daydream floats in a "balloon voyage," "high aloft in mid-nothingness." The experience described seems unwilled, but the art of the passage is of course highly deliberate. It reflects another side of Mark, and a point of view at the opposite pole from that of the realist.

Its ancient origins are in the Eden dream, or the dream of the Golden Age in classical myth:

> The long reign of Cronus, whom the Romans called Saturn, was the happy time that the poets call the Golden Age . . . In those days the whole earth was a paradise, a land of eternal spring like the dwellings of the gods. The earth brought forth its produce without man's labour and unwounded by his sharp ploughshares; the rivers ran with milk and nectar, and honey-dew dripped from the bitter oak. The animals lived at peace with one another and with man, and man was at peace with his neighbor. Metals and precious stones slept undistrubed in the ground; there was no war, no commerce, and no need for courts of law.
>
> ("A Book of Myths," Literature Curriculum I, p. 4)

But even the old anonymous myth-makers had concrete evidence in their own lives that something had happened to the Golden Age. So in the myth the dream must give way to reality; for

> loss and change began to enter the world, which now endured progressively worse ages, the Silver, the Brazen, and the harsh Age of Iron. . . The men of the Silver Age were foolish and impious, and Zeus, Cronus' successor, destroyed them because they would not honor the gods. Then he created a third race, the men of bronze, who cared for nothing but warfare and died by their own violence.

Mark runs the myth through, following his own course. Provisions begin to run short. The journey made to replenish them brings the two men back to Eden tired and hungry. The fire built to cook supper ignites the forest. The holocaust is beautiful, but it destroys the dream along with the forest. Darkness steals "down upon the landscape again." The parners are returned to the world of reality.

> Hunger asserted itself now, but there was nothing to eat. The provisions were all cooked, no doubt, but we did not go to see. We were homeless wanderers again, without any property. Our fence was gone, our house burned down; no insurance.

The undulating rhythms of the prose of fantasy give way to the stacato cadences of the prose of fact. Ahead, in Humboldt County, is the Age of Silver, where the sleep of metals in the earth is no longer "undisturbed" and the hero is "foolish and impious" along with everyone else. The peaceful silence of Eden is ripped and torn by the voice of the loudmouth "Arkansas." There is no insurance against the disasters of reality.

The materials of this kind of fantasy are drawn from the total experience of the race.

8. Point of View

In the 5th section of this discussion (Subject: the Material), we noted that there are different ways of defining the book's subject (in terms of narrative line, of its hero, of theme, of the materials of fact and fantasy). So also point of view (discussed briefly in the 3rd section, where it is related to subject and form) may be understood in different ways. The simplest although one of the most important meanings of the phrase associates it with the vantage point or perspective from which the story is told, usually identified grammatically, as first person or third person singular. Third-person narration (as it appears especially in Victorian novels) is associated with omniscience: the narrator stands outside of and, like a creating god, above the world of the narrative, and if he doesn't know all he at least knows more than his characters, more than they know either about each other or about themselves. By contrast, first-person narration is often associated with some limitation of knowledge, especially if the narrator is deeply involved in the action of his own story. Because of this, the first-person device lends itself well to the purposes of irony, as in the narratives of Lemuel Gulliver and Huck Finn. By irony here we mean simply a double meaning or double awareness involving contradiction: the hero in his innocence and ignorance tells us one thing, but we know, and we know his creator knew, that is opposite is true.

We noted in the third section that although the point of view in Roughing It is grammatically singular it allows for a double awareness. The duality here, characteristic of much first-person narrative (Robinson Crusoe, Great Expectations), is a result of the fact that the story is told in retrospect, was recorded some time after the conclusion of the book's action, when the author had lived through the experience and become a sadder and wiser man. This justifies our repeating that point of view is so closely related to subject and theme as to seem simply a different aspect of them: the journey completed, the story is told by experience looking back on innocence, the Old Timer making his report on the Tenderfoot.

There is still, then, in such a narrative, the kind of contradiction between falsehood and truth, dream and reality, that makes irony possible; but the effect is different from that of Gulliver's Travels or Huckleberry Finn. It can be thought of as irony of tone. Tone may be defined, however inadequately, as the narrator's attitude toward his subject, toward the experience he is recording, the way he feels about it. A discussion of tone, then, may carry us away from point of view conceived grammatically as an aspect of technique toward point of view in the popular sense: what's your point of view on this? There are variations of tone in Roughing It, as of course we have already seen. The mature protagonist's ironic condescension toward himself as he was in his youth and innocence is not the only tonal effect in the book.

There are times when its tone is felt as the melancholy that follows hard upon disillusionment: "So vanished my dream. . . So toppled my airy castle to the earth and left me stricken and forlorn." At other times it appears as simple indignation, a direct expression of outraged sensibility, as in the passage dealing with the tiresome Horace Greeley anecdote in the twentieth chapter. The prose of fact, at the opposite pole from such feeling, is neutral in tone: feeling is not really involved in the description of Carson City in the twenty-first chapter (quoted earlier, sixth section). It is almost scientifically detached. Mockery may serve as well as any other word for the complex tonal quality of the Washoe Zephyr description; whereas the tone of the pastoral idyll in the twenty-third chapter is nostaligic, uncomplicated by any ironic mockery, although it ends of course in a harsh deflation, following the book's central thematic line and demonstrating once more the close relationship that holds together our holy triad, three-in-one, of subject, form, and point of view.

9. Tone and Style

The words used in the preceding section to describe certain effects of tone--melancholy, mockery, indignation, etc.--are not very exact; they inadequately describe the effect of a particular passage upon us as we read. Such effects are of course primarily determined by the author's stylistic tactics, his deployment of the resources of the language for his assault upon our minds and sensibilities. It should not be necessary to emphasize, here near the end of this discussion, that student attention should be directed as systematically as possible to problems of style.

All good writing probably originates in a simple delight in language for its own sake. Good writing is play with words; and Mark's Mr. Ballou, to whom we are introduced in the twenty-seventh chapter, has the true literary impulse. We are told that he loved and used "big words for their own sakes, and independent of any bearing they might have upon the thought he was purposing to convey." His "ponderous syllables fall with an easy unconsciousness," so that "one was always catching himself accepting his stately sentences as meaning something when they really meant nothing at all." Mr. Ballou's non-utilitarian love of the grand resonance of big words is also the good writer's consuming love. Mark of course understood this well, and his awareness both counters and controls his character's "easy unconsciousness" in his spontaneous creations. So, in Chapter XXXI, Mr. Ballou

> called Ollendorff all manner of hard names--said he never saw such a lurid fool as he was, and ended with the peculiarly venomous opinion that he 'did not know as much as a logarithm!'

"Meant nothing at all"?--an ignorant comparison? How much does a logarithm know? Mark's method is clearly visible in Mr. Ballou's madness.

There are discussions of the different styles of particular passages of the book in the 6th and 7th sections of this discussion, in which subject and style are shown supporting each other (prose of fact and prose of fancy). The technique of the humor of exaggeration, of the tall tale, exemplified in the description of the Washoe Zephyr and clearly characteristic of a significant impulse in the American imagination, is sometimes found in company with a device that seems its opposite: understatement. So, writing of the complete inefficiency of the "Allen" revolver, Mark says that it

> went after a deuce of spades nailed against a tree, once, and fetched a mule standing about thirty yards to the left of it. Bemis did not want the mule; but the owner came out with a double-barreled shotgun and persuaded him to buy it, anyhow.
>
> (Italics supplied)

Missing a target with any weapon by ninety feet surely must be a bit in excess of the truth; while "persuasion" with a shotgun is obviously something less than it. The device appears frequently; for instance, in the single word that ends the description in Chapter XXI of the rivers of blood flowing down from Mr. Harris's wounds over the horse's sides: they "made the animal look quite picturesque."

The fun of understatement derives from its humorous inadequacy to the occasion in question. It can be thought of as simply one of the many devices in the humor of incongruity, which employs other means related to understatement but somewhat different in effect. Thus, after the description of Mr. Harris's bloody gun battle seen by the tenderfoot on his first day in Carson City: "I never saw Harris shoot a man after that but it recalled to mind that first day in Carson." Not quite understatement because the first shooting must surely have been fixed permanently in the protagonist's memory; but a reaction incongruously associated with a desperado's repeated killings.

The humor of incongruity embraces many of Mark's characteristic techniques. It appears as comic metaphor: the illiterate garrulity of of the female passenger in the second chapter described in the carefully contrived metaphor of the Flood of Genesis. It appears as a trait of character in the same episode: the incongruity between what the woman is and the social exclusiveness she pretends to.

> Folks'll tell you't I've always ben kind o'offish and partic'lar for a gal that's raised in the woods, . . . but when people comes along which is my equals, I reckon I'm a pretty sociable heifer after all.

Finally, it is present in the style of the judgment handed down by

Ex-Governor Rupp after hearing the testimony and the arguments of counsel in the Great Landslide Case of Chapter XXXIV. The speech employs the rhetorical flourishes of a certain kind of Protestant oratory adapted to the courtroom and the stump ("Gentlemen, it ill becomes us, worms as we are, to meddle with the decrees of Heaven"), solemn and orotund, to bring to a conclusion the ridiculous "case" of the benevolent dislocation of Mr. Morgan's ranch. At the same time, it may be said in conclusion, we detect behind it an intention that is a characteristic element in Mark's outlook, his "point of view" in the popular sense; the compulsion to pour ridicule upon the idea of Divine Providence, often felt as the bitter result of some Sunday School terrors Sam Clemens may have suffered as a boy in Hannibal.* The reference may serve, here at the end, as a reminder of how complex and perhaps ultimately enigmatic are the interconnections that bind together the world of art, issuing as it does from the mysterious human spirit itself.

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* The compulsion appears most hilariously in the story of Jim Blaine and His Grandfather's Ram in Chapter LIII, which is also an example of what may be called the humor of sustained irrelevance. Since most members of the class will not read that far, the chapter is recommended for reading aloud.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

NOVEL, The Old Man and the Sea

Literature Curriculum III

Teacher Version

Teacher Version

THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Introduction

The Old Man and the Sea lends itself admirably to study by ninth graders. To begin with, it is a novel which, while providing the students with opportunities for developing appreciation for the complexities of style, structure, and theme, will at the same time be simple enough for ninth graders to read with pleasure.

While critics do not always agree on all the aspects of this novel, it seems reasonably apparent that the basic theme is Hemingway's reaffirmation that man, who pits courage, dignity, and love against an indifferent universe, wins in losing. He may be crucified (Santiago, returning from the days of agony, lies motionless on his bed, his scarred palms turned up), but the essential triumph of man is that he can, as Santiago says, be destroyed, but he cannot be defeated. Much of the symbolism may be beyond some ninth graders, but they will all be able to see that much lies beneath the surface in the story, all the same.

Since the students have read The Call of the Wild and The Pearl in the eighth grade, they will already have been introduced to the longer narrative and will be aware of the difference between a short story and a novel. With this working knowledge of incident and character they will perhaps be able to see how form and subject merge in this structurally brilliant short novel, and appreciate the almost classical movement of action. A study in depth will reveal The Old Man and the Sea to be a "multi-layered" novel, akin to the allegory and the parable but belonging to neither genre.

Since symbolism will play a vital part in The Old Man and the Sea, it will perhaps be helpful to discuss the symbol as a literary device with the students. The teacher might ask if the class recalls a symbol Steinbeck uses in "The Red Pony" (seventh grade curriculum) or some of the symbols found in the same author's The Pearl (eighth grade novel).

Of course, most will know that a symbol is a concrete object which stands for an idea (the flag, the cross, "Uncle Sam"). Still, they may not be aware that a symbol in a literary work is a concrete image that suggests rather than defines; it seldom has a fixed meaning. To one writer an eagle may suggest courage and to another loneliness. If an author uses a symbol adroitly, he can merge idea and object into an integrated whole. Not infrequently such devices may be used to unify the action in a novel. Such is the case, certainly, in many of the medieval myths. The Arthurian legends (see ninth grade mythology unit) offer some excellent examples--ones with which the student may already be familiar. Often symbols are not intended to represent one idea at all but to suggest whole areas of meaning. In order to show students how a symbol may intensify our emotional responses, the teacher may point out that seldom are our emotions stirred when we read a page of the Constitution, however much we may admire this venerable document, but the sight of a flag fluttering in a spring breeze may bring a rush of affection for our country. Authors also find symbolical devices useful in illuminating ideas. It might be practical, at this point, to read Whitman's "Captain, My Captain" in class. The symbolism in this poem is simple and direct.

The Old Man and the Sea demands a quick reading because the emotional impact Hemingway is counting on will be lost or considerably lessened if only a few pages are read daily. During class discussions and assignments, portions of the book can be reread in class.

Author

Students were introduced to Hemingway in the eighth grade with the short story "The Killers." They will perhaps recall his style, and hopefully, the fact that careful scrutiny revealed there was more to this tale than appeared in the first quick perusal.

Hemingway won the Nobel Prize for literature for this novel--a distinction awarded, of course, not only for this novel but for his entire body of work. Probably no other American writer has so influenced the trend of modern literature nor has any other writer been so widely and usually so poorly imitated. He has not always met with critical acclaim, but the burden of his criticism has been overwhelmingly favorable. The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms, and For Whom the Bell Tolls are literary landmarks. Usually Hemingway uses metaphores of games, sports, or war to express his views. His heroes are hunters, prizefighters, bull fighters, and fishermen. They all act according to a code of conduct and accept life itself as a special game. Hemingway endorsed his own code; he was a man of action and spent considerable time as a big game hunter.

It is interesting that Hemingway, as far back as 1936, wrote a short summary of an encounter between an aged man and a marlin. He had heard the anecdote years before, he said.

Explication

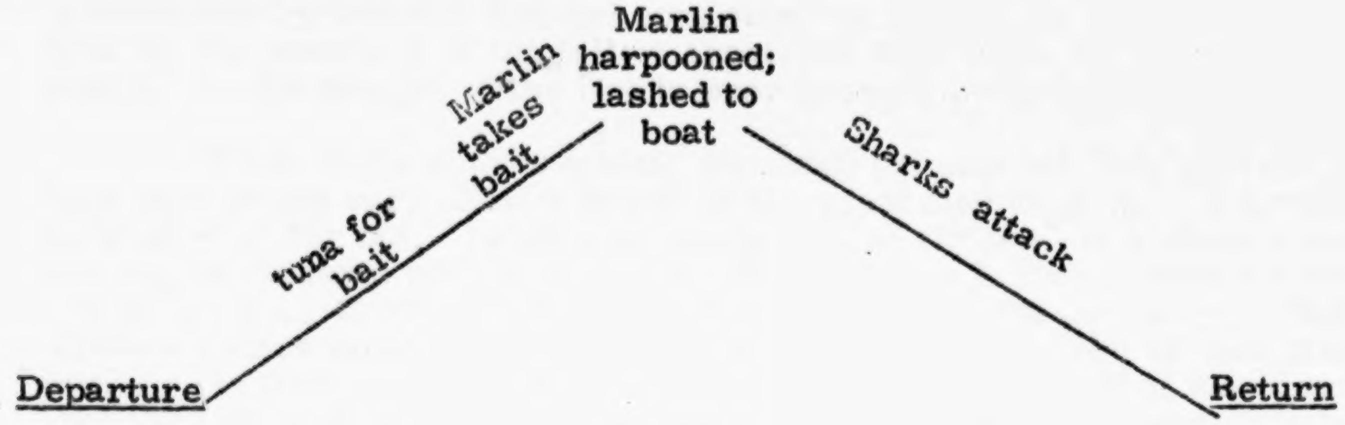
The Old Man and the Sea is about an aged fisherman who catches and loses a magnificent fish. Read on the action level alone, it is an engrossing tale. Santiago is in the ancient tradition of heroes--he is, he tells us himself, a "strange old man," who is still sturdy and quick despite his years. He has gone eighty-four days without taking a fish and people feel he is salao, unlucky; even the boy who has been in the habit of accompanying him on his skiff is no longer allowed to go with him. Manolin, however, loves Santiago and sees that he has food and bait. The old man, pondering his misfortune, decides he will go "far out" into the Gulf Stream, farther out than he has ever gone before to see if he can find a fish. The marlin that takes his bait is the biggest fish Santiago has even seen, and the fish pulls the skiff out to sea all that afternoon, all through that night, and the next day. After harpooning the marlin and lashing it to the skiff, he turns homeward. Before he can reach his village, the sharks attack and strip the great fish to a bare skeleton. Such is the subject on the literal level of The Old Man and the Sea. Yet this novel is clearly about more than an old man and a fish. It is about man, time, death, and life--it is about courage that knows no defeat, about the agony of man who fights with whatever weapons he has against enemies more terrible than sharks; it is about man's loss and man's victory. It is filled with other intangibles, too--Hemingway wrote this novel with a tenderness and gentleness found nowhere else in his work.

This novel has no arbitrary divisions, no chapters, sections, or parts. This is important in the structure of the novel, for Hemingway obviously intends the action to flow cleanly, unbroken, from start to finish. The time itself spaces the action. For two days and two nights the marlin pulls the old man and the skiff out into the open sea. When the fish tires, the old man, weary and near exhaustion, finds strength to pull the marlin alongside, to harpoon him, and lash him to the skiff. The return covers a day and a night.

Probably the best approach to the novel would be to have the students reread the opening paragraphs. The very first sentence contains considerabl information. In the following paragraphs we learn that Santiago (which is the Spanish for St. James) had lost his helper, because the boy's parents felt the old man to be salao, unlucky. We learn the boy was sorry to go, was sad to see the old man's boat with its patched sail looking like "the flag of permanent defeat" return empty each day. Hemingway's description of the old man should be noted. His hands were scarred, the scars old as "erosions in a fishless desert." Everything about the fisherman was old, Hemingway tells us, except his eyes, and they "were cheerful and undefeated." The poverty that surrounds the old man is treated objectively. This is not a novel of social protest. Attention should be called here to Santiago's dream of the lions and the white beaches. Once, long ago, he has sailed to Africa, and now, nightly, he sees the great beasts strolling on sandy beaches. They suggest courage and strength and are perhaps symbolical of the primitive world.

The first "part" of the novel, then (the evening and the night before the old man sets out to find his fish), not only introduces Santiago and Manolin, but establishes the setting and states the problem. The setting, it might be noted now, is not emphasized. While this novel is about a Cuban fisherman and the locale is a Cuban fishing village and the Gulf Stream, the novel could never be said to have "local color." Why? Hemingway takes care to see that the setting as such does not intrude. Seldom is Havana mentioned, and then only as the place where the boats carry the fish to market. The setting merges into the narrative, until somehow it is only the sea --man and the sea--in a timeless setting. The students should realize that Hemingway wants his character to be thought of as "the old man"--he is seldom referred to as Santiago. He must remain impersonal if he is to assume the identity of Man. The sea becomes symbolical of the natural world that surrounds man. It is indifferent to his fate, but it is not hostile. Santiago, it will be noted, looks upon the sea as a friend and does not feel alone when he is out in his skiff.

Form is determined--and controlled--by the subject. Hemingway, who wishes us to see that it is the dignity and courage with which man fights the inevitable destruction that is important, chooses the incidents in order to emphasize this. The major incidents are strung along the "time line" of the journey thus:



Such a brief diagram could be placed on the board. Perhaps the students could fill in the minor incidents in detail. Each of these pertinent incidents serves a dual purpose, revealing character and advancing plot. The students should note that each of the above incidents is a more or less logical outgrowth of the preceding, and, what is more, each serves as a reminder of the past, while introducing some new element intensifying the conflict. The old man's victory over the fish provides the climactic incident, the succeeding incidents lead to the conclusion. When the marlin proves to be too strong to pull aboard and begins to pull the skiff seaward, the old man braces the line against his back, and tries to bear the intolerable pain. "I will show him," he says, "what a man can do and what a man can endure." And again, "Pain does not matter to a man." Each test which Santiago meets, successfully reveals his strength of purpose and his courage. Even when his physical self falters (the cramped hand), his determination grows. When the fish is finally pulled alongside, the old man drives his harpoon into his heart, and the blood that darkens the water is the blood that attracts the first shark.

The old man destroys the first shark, but loses his harpoon. The inevitability of his defeat is no longer in doubt. More sharks will come, for the first shark has torn into the flesh of the great fish. Hemingway's purpose now becomes increasingly clear. Santiago, faltering before the realization of what must come, finds himself wishing he had not killed the fish, tha he were home "in bed on the newspapers."

"But man is not made for defeat," he decides. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated." And, turning his thoughts resolutely away from the inevitable, he tells himself, with the pride born of a million years of defying death, and of dying, "Don't think, old man. Sail on this course and take it when it comes."

Whenever his agony from "taking it" becomes too great for endurance, he thinks of the boy. The thought strengthens and sustains him. It becomes increasingly clear that Manolin is not only symbolic of Santiago's youth, but that he is also symbolic of something else--the one permanent weapon man takes with him on his lonely quest. In the boy Santiago finds strength to continue. "The boy keeps me alive," he admits. In the loneliness of life as Hemingway sees it man may create order out of disorder, manufacture hope out of hopelessness, and face death with dignity, but he is sustained by concern for and comforted by love of his fellow man and even by the presence of the fellow creatures with whom he shares his world. So the thought of the boy is ever present in the old man's mind.

When more sharks attack, Santiago defends his fish with the knife he straps to the oar. Now a fourth of the great fish is gone. "I should not have gone so far out," he decides sadly. "Too far out" is a phrase that Hemingway inserts more than once. The old man is being punished for his desire to seek, to know, to go outside the limits of the ordinary. This offers a rather pointed contrast to Tennyson's Ulysses who ranged afar, seeking "to find and not to yield." Hemingway implies that if Man goes "too far out" (not to be taken literally, of course) he is doomed to failure. A similar vein of thought is expressed by Dante, whose Ulysses "put out on the high and open sea" to find "The world beyond the sun" and found instead the Mountain of Purgatory.

But Hemingway's hero is not defeated, nor is he ever resigned to defeat. The third shark comes and Santiago loses his knife in this encounter. But he fights on, with his gaff as a club. "You're tired, old man. You're tired inside." Yet when more sharks come, he fights on. "Fight them," he says. "I'll fight them until I die." When the final pack arrives at midnight, he does fight on, but the fish is destroyed, and only a white skeleton rides beside the skiff.

It is noteworthy here to observe that Santiago finds what comfort he can in what is left. The wind is a friend, he reminds himself--sometimes; there is the sea. There are the creatures of the sky and sea. And there is the boy.

So, structurally this novel follows the traditional pattern of the journey or quest. Santiago feels a "call" to set out to find not the Holy Grail but a fish. He has been born to "be a fisherman." He is a "strange old man" of heroic proportions. He catches and fights to bring back the great marlin--his "true brother." He is tortured by thirst, hunger, and pain, and he fails to bring back the fish whole to his world of men. Only the skeleton floats in the Gulf amid the garbage the next day. But the quest of man has not been in vain. There are those that see the significance of what Santiago has brought back, but most will look indifferently at the skeleton, as do the tourists who view it. They do not even recognize it.

Of course, each reader may find something in the novel that eludes others. There have been a good many interpretations. If the framework of the quest is kept, the possibilities are endless, as Hemingway seems to have planned. Santiago may represent the artist, who goes "far out" searching for truth, and who discovers it. His work, however, is unappreciated by most, who, having eyes, see not (the tourists). All of this does not change in the slightest the basic structure or the theme of the novel.

The structure of The Old Man and the Sea is reinforced by symbolism. When Santiago is searching for his fish, he looks at the delicate terns and feels sorry for them. They foreshadow his own struggle, these delicate, living creatures, fighting for survival on the cruel sea. Then, later, as the fish pulls him and his skiff out into the Gulf, a small warbler lights on the taut line. It, too, has gone "too far out" and it trembles with fatigue. Santiago, looking at it, thinks of the hawks that will come out to meet it. But the bird cannot understand and why say anything to it? (Can man understand, either, the Hawks that await him?)

"Take a good rest, small bird," he said. "Then go in and take your chance like any man or bird or fish." The bird foreshadows the tragic events ahead, and, by using such symbols (they are interspersed throughout) Hemingway makes clear to us, his readers, the deeper meaning he wishes his narrative to convey.

It is clear enough that Santiago is symbolical of man and that Hemingway wishes us to see his ordeal as a crucifixion. The Biblical imagery is quite pointed. While the fish pulls the old man through the water, the cord cuts into his back. He tells himself, "Rest gently now against the wood and think of nothing." The words *gently* and *wood* blend with the old man's suffering and our mind produces its own image. When the sharks attack, Santiago cries "Ay" aloud. This, Hemingway tells us, has no translation, but it is just such a sound as a man might make "feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood." The old fisherman carries the mast like a cross up the hill when he returns, falling once. His hands have been cut badly and he lies in his hut sleeping "face down on the newspapers with his arms straight out and the palms up." Hemingway sees man crucified by time and the natural world, facing inevitable death, but facing it with dignity and courage. That is his triumph. He can even, like Santiago, like Christ, face it without bitterness and with humility and love for his fellow man and for his fellow creatures. Man's immortality, to Hemingway, is clearly found only in his refusal to admit defeat.

Finally, it is some of the more obvious symbols in this novel that help us to grasp something of the author's purpose. The sea seems to be representative of the whole natural world, neither friend nor foe, or rather, sometimes one and sometimes the other. The sea holds both the marlin --"true brother"--and the rapacious *dentuso.* The sharks with their gaping j jaws--living appetites--symbolize the senseless rapacity of the natural world, foe as well as friend. Ahab, it will be remembered, pursues the white whale with unrelenting anger: he sees him as evil personified. Santiago feels something of this as he drives his knife into the marauding sharks. But Santiago is more aware of the complexities of nature. He feels no hatred of the marlin he sets out to kill; rather he feels respect and even a kind of love. The fish is a noble and worthy adversary.

> You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.
>
> Now you are getting confused in the head, he thought. You must keep your head clear.... Know how to suffer like a man. Or a fish, he thought. (p. 92)

The bond he feels for the fish does not lessen even when the great marlin is reduced to a mutilated mass of flesh lashed to the tiny boat. The fish and he are brothers. The killer sharks who attack are the Enemy--the enemy not only of Santiago and the marlin, but of man and life itself.

As the students discuss the sea, the sharks, and Santiago's love for the great fish, they will probably begin to see that the author's attitude is an important part of this novel. This will lead into a consideration of point of view. Also, as the novel progresses, the students will become aware of the narrator as a person, as the voice they hear speaking. He becomes a person through his manner of speech, the values he presents, the story he tells. When the narrative is completed, the students will have a strong impresision of the speaker as a person. But point of view concerns far more than just the author's attitude. There is the attitude of the various people within the story to each other and to the events that occur. How, we must ask ourselves, does Manolin see Santiago? Is it different in any way from the way Hemingway sees him? And finally, and perhaps most importantly, the reader reacts to the events and people within this novel. For instance, we see Santiago through the eyes of the boy as an old but still powerful man, kind and wise. We see that the boy loves the old man and this influences our attitude toward Santiago considerably. We react again when we learn how Santiago feels toward the sea, the birds, the fish, the other fishermen, and the boy. Ultimately, of course, the point of view is controlled by the purpose of the author, and cannot be completely separated from subject and form.

In conclusion, we should not miss an opportunity to look closely at the language of this novel. It is simple. Why? It reflects both the subject and the characters. Santiago is an old fisherman, a primitive, who speaks in the vernacular of the people. The prose has dignity. It complements both the classic simplicity of the form and the simplicity of subject and character.

Ernest Hemingway occupies a unique position among twentieth century writers in the matter of style. His prose has a texture all its own He has great talent for making the reader taste, see, hear, smell, and feel. Consider the following paragraph:

> He did not need a compass to tell him where southwest was. He only needed the feel of the trade wind and the drawing of the sail. I better put a small line out with a spoon on it and try and get something to eat and drink for the moisture. But he could not find a spoon and his sardines were rotten. . . . So he hooked a patch of yellow gulf weed with the gaff as they passed and shook it so that the small shrimps that were in it fell onto the planking of the skiff. There were more than a dozen of them and they jumped and kicked like sand fleas. The old man pinched their heads off with his thumb and forefinger and ate them chewing up the shells and the tails. They were very tiny but he knew they were nourishing and they tasted good. (p. 97)

Note the abruptness of his sentences, vaguely reminding us of journalistic writing. His paragraphs as well as his sentences are usually very short. Note that the noun and the verb outnumber the adjective and the adverb.

One of the first and most striking characteristics of Hemingway prose is the relative absence of subordinate construction. The presence of the subordinate clause indicates intellectual discrimination, and Hemingway's appeal is not to the intellect primarily; it is directed, through every fiber of his prose, to the senses. His code of life, discussed earlier, dominates even in his choice of words. His sentences have vigor and economy They contain nouns and verbs predominately, strong words, vigorous words. The very use of "and"--which has become something of a Hemingway trademark--expresses something of the Hemingway contempt for the frills and niceties of a too-civilized world. And all of this is not to say Hemingway's prose is bad. Far from it. To begin with, it reflects its subject matter; it is original, it is the author. The full impact of Hemingway's style can be best felt if a paragraph from a Charles Dickens novel is read immediately preceding. Students who are as yet unable to put into words their concepts of style have an ear for words, all the same. Such a demonstration is usually effective, and the impression will remain longer than if the discussion of style is limited to technicalities and abstractions.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

THE SHORT STORY

Literature Curriculum III

Teacher Version

THE SHORT STORY: AN INTRODUCTION

A Johnny-Come-Lately to the literary scene, the modern short story is none the less a descendant of an old and respected literary form. Papyri salvaged from Egyptian tombs reveal imaginative accounts of life 6,000 years ago, and long beyond that, doubtless, cave men sat before smoky fires and embellished hunting escapades with fictitious deeds. A lengthy history of the form, while interesting and informative, does not necessarily lead us to a better understanding of the present form. So, with a passing nod to Greeks and Romans, Persians, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, we come to the American evolution of the short story as a form. It is often said, and not unjustly, that Poe created the modern short story. His definition is still the classic one:

> A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique effect to be brought out, he then invents such incidents--he then combines such effects as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, direct, or indirect, that is not to pre-establised design...[1]

While it is true that the form has become in the hands of some of its masters, such as Katherine Mansfield, Hemingway, and Conrad, more of a character revelation than a plotted story, every word of the above still holds true.

It is the most flexible of forms. Some writers capture a single mood, lyrically; others can create complex plots to capture diverse human emotions, or bare pertinent truths. But flexible or no, the modern short story must conform to certain criteria. It must have economy. A novelist can squander to capture some character and often does, but the short story writer is working in miniature. The form calls for intensity and for concentrated action. A moment of life, as it were, must somehow reveal a lifetime. A short story must achieve a unity of effect, so that the reader, in putting it aside, finds all the incidents merging into a single impression. The short story must engage the reader immediately--a novel can perhaps survive a poor beginning (numerous ones have) but a weak first sentence can be disastrous to the short story.

In presenting the four stories here, we chose ones of some diversity. "The Monkey's Paw" is a beautifully executed story of mystery and suspense; "The Cask of Amontillado" is a superbly crafted story by Poe at his best; and "Paul's Case" is a sensitive portrayal of a boy unable to cope with his world. Ring Lardner's "Haircut" somehow merges the two types into a remarkably fine story that reveals a character and builds at the same time a well-constructe d mystery.

Suggestions for Further Reading

If further stories are needed for class study, we suggest the following:

"Diable--A Dog" by Jack London
"Molly Morgan" by John Steinbeck

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[1] *A Pocket Book of Short Stories*, M. Edmund Speare, ed., Washington Square Press, New York, p. x.

"Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar A. Poe
"The Other Side of the Hedge" by E. M. Forster
"The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse" by William Saroyan
"Father Wakes Up the Village" by Clarence Day
"The Catbird Seat" by James Thurber
"The Man Who Could Work Miracles"by H. G. Wells
"The Three Day Blow" by Ernest Hemingway
"The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson
"Tobermory" by H. H. Munro (Saki)
"The Gentleman from San Francisco" by Ivan Bunin

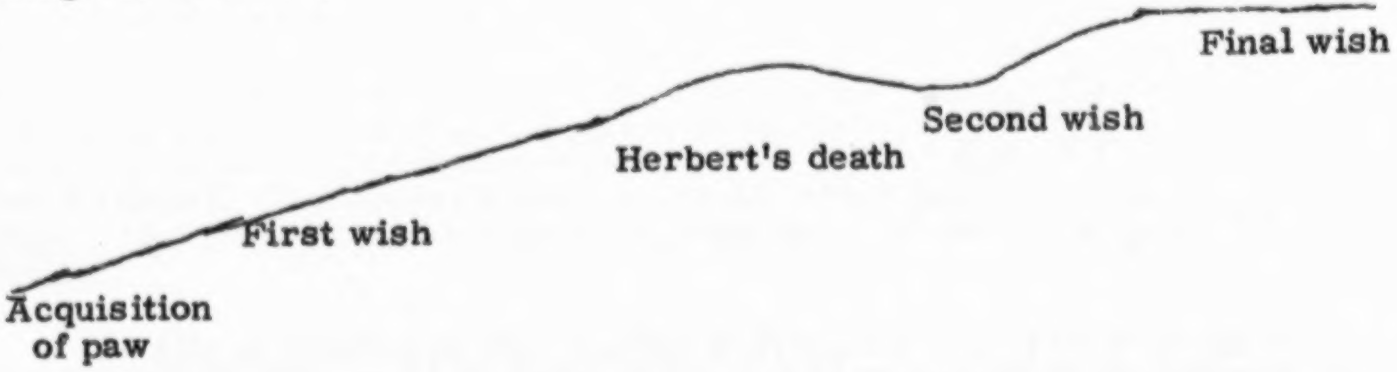
THE MONKEY'S PAW

W. W. Jacobs

An Explication

Of all the writers who have used the age-old theme of strange coincidence to startle and disconcert their readers, none have ever done so more successfully than has W. W. Jacobs in this story. "The Monkey's Paw" is a variation, of course, of the "three wish" theme that runs through many ancient tales and ballads.

The reader is plunged into an atmosphere of foreboding with the first sentence, despite the idyllic scene of a white-haired woman placidly knitting beside a cheerful fire while a father and his son good-humoredly debate the fine points of a chess battle. It is "cold and wet"and a howling wind-storm is raging outside; the pathway, as Mr. White says, "is a bog, and the road a torrent." A sense of foreboding all but nameless and hardly definable, settles over the reader. It is something of a measure of Jacob's skill that he manages this indefinable apprehension so skillfully so early in the story and does so while he establishes at the same time a matter-of-fact air of credibility. Not only are we apprehensive at what may be in store for us, but we are quite ready to accept it as a reality, for these are sensible people, sensibly described, having a tongue-in-cheek attitude that adds both to their charm and their credibility. The first movement in the plot is discernible when the son points out that their anticipated visitor will hardly arrive in such weather. From then on, each incident grows out of the preceding and, at the same time, causes the succeeding incident to occur. The action might be diagrammed thus:



Real impetus is lent the tale, of course, at the point the monkey's paw enters. It is clear enough to the reader, first, that the sergeant-major believes in the powers of the paw, and second, that he fears it. After explaining to the Whites that a fakir, a holy man, put a spell on the paw to show that fate rules people's lives "and that whoever interfered with it did so to their sorrow," the sergeant tries to change the subject. Jacobs lets us see the man's dislike and fear, and he has him reveal that the "owners" of the paw have come to grief, all of which is clear foreshadowing of impending tragedy. The acquisition of the paw thus occupies Part I.

Part II contains the first wish and the dreadful incident which follows it, an incident which, while we are prepared for something, takes us rather aback at the violence that shatters the prosaic and happy household.

Part III brings the second wish and with it a "second climax." Mrs. White's frantic wish for her son to return is followed by the violent knocking at the door below. The reader is kept in suspense while Mr. White fumbles for the paw, and as his wife finally unbars the door and flings it wide, he grasps the paw and mumbles the final wish, a wish he does not articulate and one we do not need to be told. The open door reveals an empty path; all is silent. If we were asked now to believe that Herbert had stood outside that door, mutilated, in musty grave clothes, we would perhaps shudder with pleasure, and put the story aside as a passing good mystery. It is, however, the beautifully balanced "maybe--maybe not" conclusion that intrigues us. After all, there is nothing to refute the idea that it was just a matter of coincidence. Something of the same feeling lingers with one when he completes de Maupassant's "Piece of String" although the two tales are fundamentally different.

Suspense is an important part of the structure of this story. The student will perhaps be able to see how suspense is created, incident by incident, how sharply it rises with the arrival of the messenger from the company where the boy worked, and how sharply it rises again as the knocking reverberates through the house. Actually, the least credible portion of the story is that which deals with the Whites' learning of their son's death. It seems a trifle unlikely that the news would have been broken in such a fashion. But the reader must appreciate the fact, too, that Jacobs had to have the family learn of the insurance immediately.

Jacobs has thus taken full advantage of his story's possibilities in form. But what part does point of view play? It is written in the third person, of course. We view the action with a detached impartiality that is especially helpful in imparting to us the idea that fate is somehow manipulating these people as if they were puppets. There is no emphasis upon character here. That would not serve the author's purpose. He seeks one single impression and to create it he does not need to delineate character. However, it will be interesting to have the students examine the author's attitude toward his subject. He is inviting certain responses from his readers by the way he handles his material. The reader's reaction is no less a part of the term point of view. Therefore students should consider their reactions as part of the story itself.

The abrupt closing is also worthy of special note. The students will perhaps see the value of it, and how damaging it would have been to the story if the writer had proceeded beyond that point and included a conversation between the old couple.

The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar A. Poe

This story is one of Poe's finest. It is a study in revenge, and from the first sentence until the last there is no word, no single word or phrase that does not contribute to the single effect Poe is creating. The short story as a work of art is nowhere more beautifully exemplified.

The subject is revenge. While the story deals with murder, cleverly planned and executed, it is with revenge that Poe is preoccupied. We are not allowed to forget this for a moment. Montresor's emotion dominates the tale. This story illustrates more clearly than most the fact that subject, form, and point of view are really inseparable. The subject, on one level, is murder, on another, revenge; the point of view merges with subject, for we see through Montresor's eyes and thus share his passion for revenge. Finally, the form is a series of incidents that carry out Montresor's plans to satisfy his overwhelming desire for revenge.

Undertaken as a study in craftsmanship, "The Cask of Amontillado" will be especially rewarding. It may be briefly diagramed thus:

Invitation   The Walk   The Murder
* ---------------------- * --------------------- *

The students should note that Poe does not explain why Montresor desires revenge. That is, he does not explain specifically, beyond the opening sentence that alludes to the "thousand and one injuries" the narrator has borne as best he can. The horror of the unknown clings to those "injuries"--they somehow seem far worse than they could actually be, were they spelled out. Also, we are not concerned here with Fortunato's behavior in the past, even if such behavior has had direct bearing upon present circumstances. We are here concerned only with a very short space of time--an hour perhaps--and what happens to Fortunato in that time. Revenge is the key word here, and every word, every phrase, emphasizes it, and it alone.

We can also see in this story how incident grows out of incident, each firmly rooted in the past, while projecting the action toward the climax. Montresor makes clear to us at once his definition of revenge: the avenger must not only punish but punish with impunity. The invitation plays upon Fortunato's conceit and he accepts it, going into the vaults to taste the rare wine. The gaiety of the carnival offers a contrast to the somber theme, but note the word Poe chooses to describe the season--the madness of the carnival. It offers connotations that blend into his dark symphony.

The conversation between the two as they descend into the catacombs increases our suspense as to the outcome of this strange trip. Montresor, who as he grows more sure of his victim, plays with Fortunato as a cat with a mouse, is clearly absorbed in savoring his revenge fully. Fortunato's pride and the scorn with which he views Montresor are fully grasped by the reader in the allusion to the mason, a play on words, the true import of which is lost on Fortunato.

The student should note the choice of words, such as crypt, nitre, and damp, which now increase in number. The dampness penetrates the written page and the reader becomes increasingly aware of the chill.

The chaining of Fortunato and the walling of him gain in horror because of the manner in which Montresor goes about his undertaking. Understatement is often as valuable a technique in creating horror as in creating humor and Poe was aware of this.

The story comes to an abrupt close and once again we should note that we are not concerned with anything beyond the destruction of Fortunato. Yet we do learn, and we must, if we are to know that Montresor has accomplished his revenge with impunity, that for a half century no one has disturbed the old rampart of bones.

Thus the form is classic in its execution. Each element combines in order to create an effect.

The point of view is first person as in most of Poe's stories. This accomplished, he felt, a degree of reality impossible to achieve in any other way. We see the incidents through the eyes of Montresor and we see only the things he sees. This allows the author to reinforce the theme of revenge found in both form and subject and thus achieve a unity of effect he desires. If this story had been told in the third person, either from the point of view of the main character or from an omniscient view, the story would have suffered. Poe wants us to see Fortunato as Montresor sees him; he wants us to see the murder as Montresor sees it.

Characters are less important in this story than the over-all effect, but we do learn something of the mocking pride of Montresor and the conceit of Fortunato. However, the characters are really only puppets. They are caught up in the action, borne as it were down the swift stream of narration, submerged by the swirling darkness of the act of revenge itself.

PAUL'S CASE

Willa Cather

Explication

This is a somber story told with a gratifying lack of sentimentality. It paints nevertheless a stark picture of a boy caught in a mesh of realities he could not bear. Paul, a high school student, is a sensitive boy who tries to close his eyes to the terrifying dullness of the world of which he is a part. He lives for the hours he can spend in a stock company theater or in Carnegie Hall--as an usher. There he can share the excitement of a world that holds the beauty his own lacks. It is not that Paul wants to be an actor; rather "what he wanted was to see, to be in the atmosphere, float on the wave of it, to be carried out,...away from everything."

In this story there is from the first line a certain fierce urgency present; it is as if the reader, too, as well as Paul, is racing breathlessly from one event to another, and after the story is finished and laid aside, there remains the image of Paul, rushing down the hill after his "interview"--or inquisition!--with the enraged faculty, looking back over his shoulder for his pursuers, while running blindly toward his doom.

Such an effect was not achieved without calculation. Paul, fleeing the drabness of his world and the ugly realities with which he could not cope, is the central figure of the story. No other character is more than suggested. The terror that Paul feels--not of the faculty alone but of his life in general--becomes apparent in the second paragraph; the hysterical brilliancy of his eyes tells us as much as the strained politeness he exhibits when confronted by his teachers. (Perhaps we should take wry note here that it is his English teacher "who leads the pack." The students are likely to!) It is important to note the numerous details by which Cather allows Paul to reveal his tensions. It is the drawing teacher who paints another unforgettable moment for us:

> One warm afternoon the boy had gone to sleep at his drawing board, and his master had noted with amazement what a white, blue-veined face it was; drawn and wrinkled like an old man's about the eyes, the lips twitching even in his sleep.

Paul can lose himself momentarily in Carnegie Hall, where he is an usher, and he flees there after his faculty interview ends. The real world, with its pitiless clarity, fades; the music releases his imagination, which shuts out the disorders of the day and the dread of tomorrow.

He avoids home as long as he can, but at last is driven there by the rain and by the hour. "The moment he turned into Cordelia Street he felt the waters close above his head." He is overtaken by a physical depression; and "a shuddering repulsion" for the ordinary. Who among us has not felt likewise momentarily, at least once or twice, when we have too abruptly left the world of the imagination, and faced the sudden inescapable trivialities of existence? The absolute misery of the boy is revealed in his final decision not to go to "that room" of his that night, but to sit by the furnace below until daybreak.

The Sunday that follows emphasizes the world of the ordinary with which Paul is surrounded. He escapes again in the evening, this time to the theater where he loiters about the dressing rooms, relishing the flavor of an alien world. Why is the theater so beautiful to Paul? As Cather says, "Perhaps it was because, in Paul's world, the natural nearly always wore the guise of ugliness, that a certain element of artificiality seemed to him necessary in beauty." At any rate it is important to note that Paul finds music and the theater a shortcut to other worlds; books are too slow a passport and his need to flee too deep and too urgent.

Against a night of lights and music the "pitiful seriousness about prepositions" which the teachers engage in becomes even more unbearable; to dull the agony he makes up elaborate stories to tell his fellow pupils of impending visits to Naples and to Egypt.

It is this which leads to the climax of the story. Paul's lifeline to the theater and to Carnegie Hall suddenly snaps, and it leaves him marooned in reality. His life has been made bearable by this contact with another world. Now the principal speaks to his father, he is taken from school and put to work. The stock company actors are warned not to allow him to visit again.

Such is the act that drives Paul to steal a large sum of money from the company he is working for, and to flee to New York where he spends eight days of what he considers happiness.

There, surrounded by the realization of all his dreams, the boy "burns like a faggot." After eight days, he learns his father is coming for him, for his exploit is known and is to be forgiven. His father has repaid the sum. The minister and the Sunday School teacher, the newspapers say, are eager to save him.

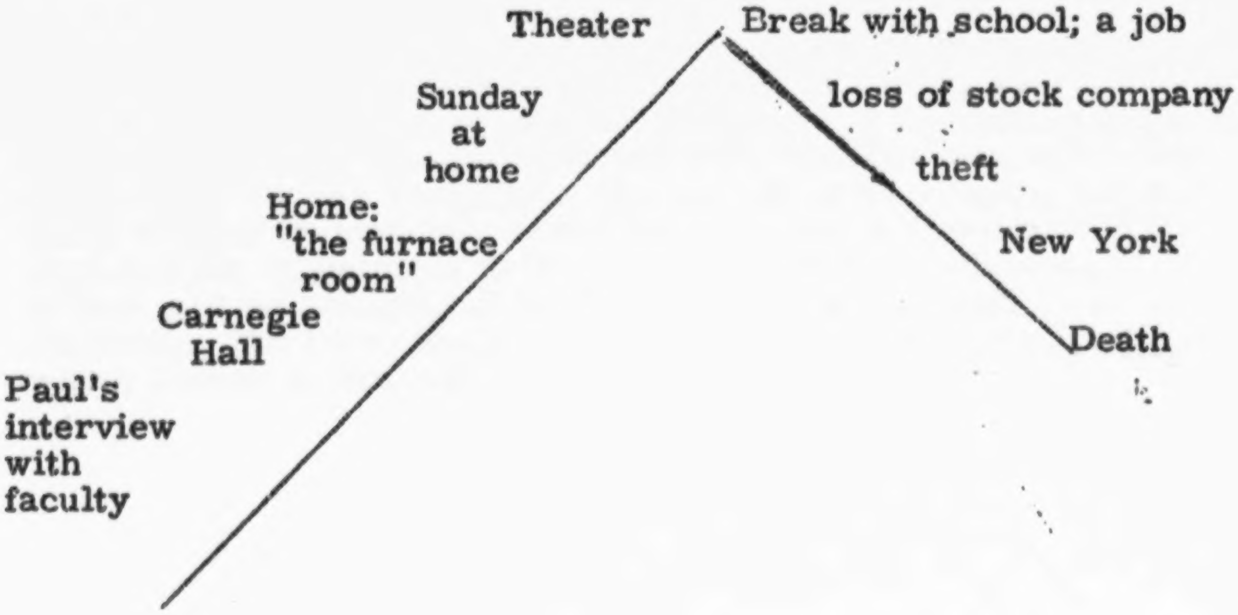
Such an impending disaster gives Paul "the old feeling that the orchestra had suddenly stopped, the sinking sensation that the play was over."

It is now we discover that Paul had foreseen this moment on his first day in New York. The gun seems shiny and a part of the world he hates. He hurries instead to find escape another way.

The carnation he wears in his coat droops in the cold as he stumbles through the snow to the railroad tracks. "...it was only one splendid breath they had, in spite of their brave mockery at the winter outside the glass."

Paul's "brave mockery" of winter is also at an end. All the world has "become Cordelia Street, and Paul, burying his wilted flowers in the snow, flings himself down an embankment in front of an approaching train. Even now in this last moment his mind struggles desperately to shut out reality. The blue of Adriatic waters and the yellow of Algerian sands flash before his eyes and then the picture-making mechanism ceased and Paul dropped back into the immense design of things."

The action of the story, then, is compressed into a tight little journey. It may be diagrammed as follows:



The subject is a boy, and a boy's incompatibility with his world. But it is about more, also, for Cather's portrait of Paul is so arrestingly drawn that we see in the sensitive boy unable in his loneliness and despair to cope with the terrible trivialities of life something of man himself, fleeing before an alien and hostile world. This theme is a recurrent one in the stories and novels of Willa Cather, an American novelist generally conceded to be among the three or four finest writers our country produced in the first half of the twentieth century. A native of the Midwest, she taught high school English in Nebraska before beginning her writing career with *The Troll Garden*, a collection of short stories. Among her best novels are *My Antonia*, *O Pioneers*, and *A Lost Lady*. She was noted for her insight into character, her perception, and her compassion. Willa Cather died in 1947.

The story "Paul's Case" is narrated in the third person. While the author focuses her attention on Paul, we do not see the other characters through his eyes. Rather, we stand aside and look at them all, including Paul, with the author. Paul's point of view is, of course, "Paul's Case" in a very real sense. His teachers' attitude toward him contains little charity, but in their eyes it is a reasonable one. He does not conform, and nonconformity is considered a sickness, not only by teachers but also by man in general. No one understood Paul. It may be interesting to observe that the boy saw the stock company actors as important personages in a world of wonder, completely divorced from reality. They, however, when Paul was exposed, were amused at this; *they* saw themselves in a drab world of hardship.

But what is the author's point of view? How does she view Paul? As an ordinary run-of-the-mill juvenile delinquent who needs sympathy? Or as a sensitive boy faced with harsh realities with which he cannot cope? Since Paul is nowhere portrayed without compassion, we soon perceive Cather's attitude. But how does she regard Paul's "enemies?" There is no condemnation no disapproval openly expressed, but the actions of these people leave no doubt that they stand indicted in her eyes, not only for what they do but for what they do not do.

However, when he finishes the story the reader will invariably ask himself if there is not a deeper meaning, a more inclusive theme expressed here. Indeed, as a fine--even brilliant--short story, it reflects Cather's attitude toward life. Much of her work is concerned with the problems and sufferings of a sensitive person in a harsh and ugly world. Something of Thomas Hardy's *Jude* is found in these pages. Paul is not a hero in the usual sense of the word. He is not strong or brave or successful. But he *is* sensitively attuned to the world of feeling. He cannot bear the agony of life and finds the solitude of death preferable. Cather sees not only Paul but man as a tragic figure, trapped by his own evolution. He seems, quite simply, too highly evolved to exist without tremendous suffering. Cather is concerned in "Paul's Case" with man and his adjustment to the harshness of his environment. Just how much of this will be brought out in class will be determined by the maturity of the students. But they should be made aware that it is the *friction* of life with which Cather is dealing.

HAIRCUT

Ring Lardner

The subject of "Haircut" is two-fold. It is, literally, a story about a haircut; the title is neither misleading nor elusive. A small town barber is giving a haircut to a customer who is new in town. But along with the haircut the customer gets an engrossing tale having to do with anger, cruelty, loyalty, and murder.

The story is told in the first person by Whitey, the barber, in a rustic dialect and in a deceptively rambling style. Actually the story is tightly knit for all its seeming casualness. Lardner uses his narrator to tell the story in order to achieve just this effect, and in addition, through Whitey's matter-of-fact narrative, the effect of reality.

The very first sentence, with its stress upon another, arouses our curiosity and gets the story underway: from then on the story moves smoothly in an even line until the final sentence when our curiosity is completely satisfied. Students should thus have an opportunity to learn a good deal about form while reading this story. Lardner has arranged the incidents in this story in such a way that we grow gradually aware of the villainy of Jim. Not even Whitey's remark that Jim was "kinda rough but a good fella at heart" prepares us in the slightest for what follows. Yet the first feeling that Jim is not altogether the gay card he's reputed to be seems to strike a sensitive reader as he witnesses Milt Shepherd's discomfiture as Jim "kids" him. It is not, however, until Whitey tells about Jim's habit of sending cards at random to some luckless men in the towns he has passed through, that the first definite suspicion flowers, and we say to ourselves, "Why, that's not funny at all, and what is more, the author doesn't think so either, even if Whitey does." From this point on, Lardner's incidents flow smoothly--one growing out of the other--until the conclusion. We become increasingly disenchanted with Jim as each succeeding anecdote is related. His treatment of his wife and children, his cruelty to the boy Paul, and the ugly joke he plays on the girl Julie strip him of our sympathy. Doc Stair's conversation with Whitey ("...anybody that would do a thing like that ought not to be let live") gives us our first direct hint as to the outcome of the story. When we learn the boy Paul has gone duck-hunting with Jim, the "accidental" death becomes something less than a surprise.

To return momentarily to point of view, this story offers an opportunity for students to sse how an author's attitude toward his "people" may differ dramatically from the narrator's. Jim is presented in such fashion as to leave little doubt in our mind about Ring Lardner's attitude toward him, but Whitey's attitude may be more puzzling. It is true that it seems straight-forward ("He certainly was a card!" and again, "I thought he was all right at heart, but just bubblin' over with mischief"). However, there is momentary doubt now and again that Whitey could be as obtuse as he sounds. But it is also interesting to consider Julie's attitude toward Jim, and his reaction to her, for this tale is not primarily a murder story--in fact, not remotely so--but a character study.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

INTRODUCTION TO LYRIC POETRY

Literature Curriculum III

Teacher Version

LYRIC POETRY

Introduction

Lyric poetry arises from a powerful feeling. Its subjects are as various as human experience. Anything that makes an impression on the poet, whether it is in the world outside him or in the world of his own imagination, may suggest a poem. It may be the reality of changing phenomena clothed in an image, as in Keats' poem on the permanence of earth's poetry in the midst of changing seasons. It may be a celebration of one feature of nature, as in Shakespeare's "Winter." The poet uses the concrete terms of his experience to create an emotional response in the reader. He does not present his emotional experience in the raw; Wordsworth's description of poetic composition as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" is a good one, for the emotion is ordered in a work of art. For unity in our approach, let us consider the following poems as the expression of a dominant emotion in a short, non-storied, metrical form.

A poem means more than it says. The concrete terms are really metaphorical. Robert Frost maintains that all poetry is metaphor, and metaphor means "saying one thing in terms of another," of making an unknown thing familiar and knowable by comparing it to a known thing. Students must be taught to read poetry so as to see that every poem is talking about more than it seems to be talking about. Even images that appear to be literal descriptions of sensuous attributes become, in the context of a poem, metaphorical. Although the images of Shakespeare's "Winter" seem literal enough, they have been selected to represent a basic contrast in man's perception of winter, a contrast between the coldness and harshness of the season and the cozy world that man creates to counter the forbidding elements. In other words, the details portray a particular perception and therefore suggest a reality larger than they themselves contain.

Technical and subject material stressed in the unit includes the following: image, metrical analysis, sonnet and quatrain stanza form, carpe diem motif, and pastoral mode.

Images may rely on visual, or auditory, or olfactory, or any other sense for their effect. They may combine two senses for a mixed effect: for example, Keats' "new-mown mead" suggests an appearance, a smell, and a tactile sensation all at once.

Students should recognize the importance and function of meter. Every human being responds, according to Aristotle, to the basic instincts of rhythm and harmony. Rhythm is what sets poetry apart from prose (despite the fact that there are famous rhythmical prose passages, the rhythm is not in a regular pattern), and students should develop the ability to recognize basic patterns. It is easy for students to feel and mark the rhythm in a nursery rhyme, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb." It is really no harder to mark a sonnet. The nursery rhyme introduces the basic feet, such as iamb and trochee, and it familiarizes them with substitution of different kinds of feet in a line. Students should not be overburdened with metrical analysis, but they should be introduced to it. Beginning with a regular stanza, such as the last stanza of Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned," gives the students solid ground:

> Ēnou̍gh / ōf Sci̍/ēnce ānd / ōf Ar̍t;
>
> Clōse u̍p / thōse ba̍r/rēn lea̍ves;
>
> Cōme fo̍rth, / ānd bri̍ng / wīth yo̍u / ā hea̍rt
>
> Thāt wa̍t/chēs ānd / rēcei̍ves.

They should see that Wordsworth makes the meter so regular because he wants to have a conclusion to the poem that is unshakably solid, with a resounding firmness to fit the character of the persona and of the message. Students can look at the rest of the poem and see how often Wordsworth varies the iambic pattern. Only rather dull poems sustain a rigidly regular rhythm; the good poets use much substitution. Tension, syncopation, variety, emphasis, and interest are gained by changes in the prevailing meter. Students should be cautioned not to read a poem with rigidity, trying to get it to fit into a pattern of -'/-'/-'/-'/-'/. The eleventh line of Shakespeare's sonnet "Shall I Compare Thee" is a line that should not be read in iambic pattern, but read more like this:

> Nōr shāll Dea̍th / bra̍g / thōu wa̍nd / ērst īn / hīs sha̍de.

The words *Death* and *brag* should receive, and do logically receive, much more weight, pause, and emphasis than *nor* or *shall*.

To recapitulate on meter: (1) the basic unit of the poetic line is a foot, which is a pattern of stressed and/or unstressed syllables. In English poetry, the commonest foot is the iamb, an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable. The trochee appears often, too. It is a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. (2) Variations in the prevailing sound pattern are not only possible but desirable. In an iambic line, some feet may have a different arrangement of stresses, and in an iambic poem, some lines may not be iambic at all. (3) The purpose of rhyme is not merely to repeat sound pleasingly but to unify and bind the lines together in sound as well as meaning. (4) Lines may vary in the number of feet. Students may not need to know the names of the various lines, but they should see the relationship between line length, meaning, and sound.

Two stanza patterns are used more than any other in this unit: the sonnet and the quatrain. The Shakespearean sonnet should be examined from the point of view of structure: three quatrains provide variations on and developments of the main theme. A couplet concludes, usually summing up and repeating the theme in a brief statement. The Italian sonnet has two parts, the octave and the sestet. The first eight lines (octave) state the idea or problem, and last six (sestet) provide a resolution or conclusion. The quatrain is the favorite English verse form, as the iambic is the favorite foot. Wordsworth, Raleigh, Marlowe, and others provide easy examples of the quatrain. Wordsworth's stanza is the typical ballad stanza, lines 1 and 3 iambic tetrameter, lines 2 and 4 iambic trimeter, with rhyme scheme abab:

> Ŏ̄ne i̍m/pūlse frōm / ā ve̍r/nāl wo̍od
>
> Māy te̍ach / yōu mo̍re / ōf ma̍n,
>
> Ōf mo̍r/āl e̍/vīl ānd / ōf go̍od,
>
> Thān a̍ll./ thē sa̍/gēs ca̍n.

Raleigh and Marlowe use the long ballad stanza, all four lines iambic tetrameter, with one of the several variations in rhyme scheme, aabb.

The students should analyze meter and stanza form, but they should not make a poem jog along in rocking horse rhythm: they should become aware of the substitutions and variations.

The poems in this unit suggest a concern for two themes, although they were not especially chosen to illustrate themes. They happen to fall into two groups, one of which treats of nature, the other love. Perhaps one theme should be pointed out to the students, that of carpe diem (seize the day). The Latin origin of the phrase suggests its antiquity, and indeed we find the theme of "gather ye rosebuds while ye may" and "make hay while the sun shines" broadcast to us daily in our contemporary lives. Raleigh humorously replies to Marlowe's shepherd's urgent appeal to come and take the joys of life now. The poems by Marlowe and Raleigh suggest another motif, the pastoral, a literary convention almost as old as literature, where the poet assumes the voice and manner of a shepherd. The pastoral mode is attractive because it offers all the goodness, innocence, and simplicity of country life to a city or court dweller, without any disadvantages of hard, dirty work. The pastoral poet seems to subscribe to Rousseau's view that civilization is a corrupting influence and that the simple country life is the good one.

You may wish to add other poems of your own choosing which fit in well with the poems in the unit. We have kept the unit short enough that you may add a few poems if you wish.

William Shakespeare: "Winter" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

Shakespeare's "Winter," like Tennyson's "The Eagle" and Dickinson's "The Snake" which follow, demonstrates the ability of the poet to convey a vivid impression of his subject without ever directly stating what that impression is. By presenting selective, concrete images in terms rich with connotative power, he invites the reader to participate in his own experience of winter. The images are not merely visual; the tactile and auditory senses are often evoked, and suggestions of taste ("roasted crabs") and smell ("While greasy Joan doth keel the pot") are also suggested. Virtually every detail in the poem may be examined for its suggestive quality. It is important to observe that the words "cold" and "unpleasant" do not appear in the poem.

The speaker of the poem gives no indication of his identity, which is unimportant as he reveals no definite attitude about winter. Whereas another might view winter as a "dead" season or as a time of extreme discomfort, Shakespeare simply presents his subject to us--he offers no "judgment" about it. He does, however, indicate a contrast in the poem: each stanza ends with a refrain which sums up the experience of winter as a contrast between the bitter cold of the outdoors and the cozy warmth inside. Although the extreme temperature might be unpleasant, the song of the "staring owl" is a "merry note" when heard from inside the house "While greasy Joan doth keel the pot."

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the details in the poem could not be portrayed in a painting? Which ones of our five senses does "Winter" appeal to?

2. What is meant by "the parson's saw?"--The word denotes a "wise saying," but a pun is apparent, suggesting the drone of his voice.

3. What is emphasized by the refrain at the end of each stanza?--The contrast between outside and inside.

4. Does the word "cold" appear in the poem? How has the poet so sharply conveyed the sensation of cold?--This question should lead students to consider the poetic advantages of imagery as opposed to abstract statement. They can learn that images enable the reader to share in the experience rather than simply hear about it.

5. In verse or paragraph form, describe one of the other seasons. Use details and images that convey your general impression of the season, but do not state what your main impression is--let your details do it for you.

Emily Dickinson: "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass"
(See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

The experience in which Emily Dickinson invites her readers to participate is decidedly more emotional and personal than that offered by either "Winter" or "The Eagle." Like Shakespeare and Tennyson, she presents a vivid description of her subject through carefully selected images; however, whereas Tennyson permits the reader to observe the eagle and Shakespeare allows him to sense the qualities of winter, Dickinson causes the reader to react to the snake.

The focus in the poem shifts from the snake to the speaker of the poem, whose reaction contributes to the description of the snake. Note that actual references to the appearance of the snake occur only in stanzas 1, 2, and 4, and that direct mention is made of only one quality of the snake--its movement; yet the reader feels, even after the first reading, that he has actually experienced the creature.

Perhaps the best way to approach this poem is to examine the diction, phrasing, and imagery for their suggestive effects. Subtlety pervades the first four stanzas; the subject is never labeled for the reader, but a series of images focusing upon various aspects of the subject contributes to a total impression of the snake. The first line, for instance, does not identify the subject; it is not until movement is suggested that we begin to suspect the fellow's identity. The use of "rides" rather than "moves" or "slithers" appropriately captures the graceful movement of the snake without making its identity obvious. The last line of stanza 1, "His notice sudden is," repeats the notion of interrupted movement implied earlier by the word "occasionally"; and the inversion of verb and complement does more than simply fit phrase to meter--the displacement, which surprises the reader, emphasizes the suddenness of his appearance. The second stanza continues the notion of an elusive character whose appearance is sudden and occasional. The grass, not the snake, dominates the image here--it divides, closes, and opens again, revealing the snake which is described merely as "a spotted shaft."

Coldness and dampness, qualities usually associated with snakes, are presented indirectly in stanza 3: "He likes a boggy acre, / A floor too cool for corn." No reference is made here to the actual body of the snake, but the terse description of his preferred habitat produces the necessary association. The "surprise motif" which dominates stanzas 1 and 2 continues in 3 and 4: he often appears under the morning sun, warming himself, yet he is unexpected--he seems to "belong" in cold, damp places, thus he is repeatedly mistaken for something else. The use of "wrinkled" at the end of stanza 4 captures in a word the sudden, elusive quality of the snake's appearance and movement.

The first four stanzas present a relatively objective view of the subject in comparison to the concluding stanzas, which reveal the feeling of the poet or speaker toward the subject. Although other creatures are regarded with a "transport of cordiality," the appearance of the snake always evokes an intense reaction--"a tighter breathing, / And zero at the bone." Actually, the experience seems more "visceral" than emotional; the first four stanzas suggest no reason to fear the snake or to feel an aversion toward it, yet the appearance of the creature (apparently a harmless garter snake) always produces the physical reactions which accompany fear.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the subject of the poem? (Although this question appears all too obvious, a surprising number of students will deduce from the first and last lines that the subject is a dead man in a field.)

2. The poem may be divided into two parts. Where would you draw the line? Why?--The first four stanzas describe the habits of the snake; the last two present the poet's reaction to it.

3. Which verbs in the poem convey movement? In what way are they effective verbs for the subject of this poem?--Students should notice "rides" and "wrinkled," which suggest the rather mysterious movement peculiar to snakes. They should also notice "divides," "closes," and "opens," which actually refer to the grass but imply the movement of the snake.

4. What other words, besides the verbs, suggest movement? Can you identify the simile and the metaphor?--This question should lead students to see that the words and images in the poem have been carefully chosen to contribute to the total effect. "Notice" and "sudden" connote movement, as do the phrases "as with a comb" and "a whip lash in the sun," which the student should be able to identify as simile and metaphor.

5. Why does the poet alter the position of the last two words in stanza 1? Does this shift in any way contribute to the idea expressed in that line?--See explication.

6. What is your attention mainly drawn to in stanza 2? Why?

7. In stanza 3, what two "snakelike qualities" are suggested?

8. What is meant by the phrase "a transport of cordiality?" How would you explain, in other terms, the poet's attitude toward most of "nature's people?"

9. What is the poet's feeling toward the "narrow fellow in the grass?" Which phrase or phrases most directly convey(s) this feeling? Is there anything in the first four stanzas to support that feeling?--See explication.

10. Look back over the poem and count the times that the snake actually "appears" in the poem. If you actually "experienced" the snake, as most readers do while reading this poem, how do you account for that fact?--Students should see that the details have been selected to convey the experience of encountering a snake, not merely to tell what a snake looks

like and how it functions. The elusive quality of the snake is realistically imitated by the way it slips in and out of the poem.

11. Does Dickinson employ a regular rhyme scheme here? Describe the pattern she uses.

12. See how many examples of alliteration you can find.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "The Eagle" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

The first stanza presents an image of a motionless eagle poised high above the rest of the world. So far, the details could be enclosed within a frame with the eagle, standing "ringed with the azure world," as the focal point. The alliterative sequence of the hard "c" sound; the solitary, regal image of the eagle; and particularly the words "clasps" and "stands" suggest his latent power.

In the second stanza, however, two things happen which defy graphic representation. The point of view shifts from the observer to the eagle himself, and the world below is, for a moment, the point of focus: "The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls." His keenness of vision is suggested in the fifth line as he scouts for his prey, and finally in the last line his power is released.

"The Eagle" is as objective as a poem can be. The author reveals no sentiment toward his subject, and we might even be stretching things a bit to say that he expresses wonder at the sight of the bird. Although his account is not of the type which we would find in the dictionary (which might be consulted for comparison), his description of the bird simply takes into account the qualities that most people associate with eagles: strength, speed, and sharp-sightedness. Why is this poetry? Because it enables the reader to experience the eagle as the poet experienced it. Because it presents the experience in terms of vivid and memorable imagery. And because the poem means more than it says. The word "power," for instance, appears nowhere in the poem, yet the reader emerges with an unmistakeable sensation of power. The phrase "his mountain walls" suggests fortification and the personal pronoun gives the bird a mysterious human quality. The fact that the eagle has so frequently been used as a symbol of power (it is associated with Zeus, with Imperial Rome, and with the United States of America) attests to the accuracy of Tennyson's impression of the bird.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. If a camera were to focus upon the eagle for a still shot, what details in the poem would have to be omitted?

2. Notice the repetition of the hard "c" sound. This repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of words is called "alliteration." Does this sound convey a certain impression? What is it? How does it "fit" the eagle?

3. Why does Tennyson use the word "wrinkled" to describe the sea? To what is he comparing the sea? As you probably know, this kind of comparison is called "metaphor"--a word usually associated with one kind of thing is applied to another without any direct expression of comparison or similarity between the two. --From above, the waves might appear like wrinkles, as in a piece of cloth or paper.

4. What comparison do you find in line6? How is this kind of comparison different from metaphor? This particular figure of speech is called a "simile."

5. What would be the effect of a punctuation mark within the last line?

6. Notice the rhyme scheme. Is there any relationship between the strict rhyme and the subject of the poem? Explain. --The stark, monosyllabic end rhymes contribute to the sense of the eagle's strength.

7. What qualities of the eagle does Tennyson suggest in his poem? What quality dominates our impression of the eagle? --See explication.

William Cullen Bryant: "To a Waterfowl" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

The comparison of man's life to some ephemeral aspect of nature is an ancient practice. Homer compares the generations of men to the leaves which fall from the trees. The Venerable Bede comes closer to Bryant's poem when he compares the life of man to the flight of a bird through one window of a lighted room and out another--darkness to darkness, separated by a brief interval of light. Bryant observes a migratory bird and draws from the annually recurring flight the idea that the same Providence which directs the bird will also direct his own life. Though bird and man both go through a pathless, illimitable region, they are both protected and guided.

The poem has much imagery in it easy to visualize, some good, and some simply 19th century poetic diction. The opening stanza is written in formal inversion (not popular in poetry today) and employs a personification: the heavens are said to be glowing with the last steps of day. Presumably that means that the sun is walking through heaven and is near the end of its walk. The lines have a rosy quality which does not stand up too well under close logical scrutiny, but their evocative power is nonetheless high.

The second stanza carries on the evening sky image, linking the stanzas by calling the "rosy depths" a "crimson sky." A disturbing element is introduced, the malevolence of man, the creature who would do wilful harm to other creatures. Bryant sets the stage to introduce a power higher than man, which is benevolent instead of cruel. He does not, however, immediately jump to the Power, but gives further details--the weedy lake, the ocean side--which suggest the vastness and variety of nature. The Power guides the fowl to a safe rest. Animals are lesser creatures than men. Therefore, if "He" looks after animals, how surely must he look after men.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the poem set in the early evening?--The coming evening, with all its connotations of darkness (and consequent connotations of death) makes the poet wonder about the meaning of life.

2. Why does Bryant devote the third stanza to a description of where the bird might go?--To show the vastness and variety of nature and to reinforce his later suggestions that a Power guides the bird through that vastness to a safe home.

3. What is Bryant comparing the bird to?--Man. The flight of the bird is comparable to man's journey through life.

4. Point out the different images in the poem. --Dark bird flying alone in crimson evening sky while dew falls, the description of the plashy brink of the lake, the marshy river, the crashing waves (one of the few sound images in this predominantly visual poem) of the ocean beach (notice how neatly Bryant gets in all the places a waterfowl might go to), reeds bending over the nest, and so on.

5. Why does stanza 4 have no concrete images?--Bryant is describing an abstract idea, a Power, that is best realized through suggestiveness rather than through concreteness. The vagueness of pathless and the infinity of illimitable give an idea of the nature of that power.

6. What does the bird mean to Bryant?--Men seek constantly to know the meaning of life, and anything that seems to have a purpose makes them think their own life has a purpose. The bird gives Bryant that assurance.

"Expostulation and Reply"

by William Wordsworth

"Why, William, on that old grey stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

"Where are your books?--that light bequeathed
To beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply:

"The eye--it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

"Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away."

"The Tables Turned"
An Evening Scene on the Same Subject by William Wordsworth
(See text in Student Version)

EXPLICATION:

Wordsworth said that "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" "arose out of a conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy." Although the poems are independent units, "Expostulation and Reply" is included in the Teacher Version so that it may be used to explain the title and subtitle of the second poem.

Both poems illustrate Wordsworth's anti-rationalism, his conviction that reason alone could not lead man to a discovery of the deepest truths. Although the carpe diem motif is perhaps implied in the poems, Wordsworth's thesis of course is not that the pleasures of nature should be enjoyed "before it is too late," but rather that nature is a better teacher than science. A soul receptive to natural beauties and impulses may learn "more of man, / Of moral evil and of good" from nature than he can from books. Stanzas 6 and 7 of "The Tables Turned" express the core of Wordsworth's nature philosophy, and the often quoted "We murder to dissect" tersely summarizes his distrust of scientific analysis.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is meant by "surely you'll grow double" and "clear your looks" in stanza 1?

2. What is the subject of the sentence in stanza 2?

3. How many specific aspects of nature does Wordsworth mention in the poem?

4. What way of life does Wordsworth object to in this poem? For what reasons? What way of life does he advocate? Why?

5. Pick out three or four lines which in your opinion best sum up his attitude.

6. In stanza 6 Wordsworth says that a person will learn more about good and evil from walking in the woods than from studying the opinions of philosophers. What suggestion of this idea has he given in the preceding stanzas?

7. The last line of stanza 7 is often quoted. What does it mean? How does the meddling intellect misshape the beauteous form of things? Do you think this is true? If not, how would you try to convince Wordsworth?

Christopher Marlowe: "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"
Sir Walter Raleigh: "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd"
(See texts in Student Version)

EXPLICATION: (Marlowe and Raleigh)

These two poems typify two responses to the carpe diem theme. Marlowe wants to take all the pleasures that life has to offer, to sit in pleasant valleys surrounded by flowers, accepting the bountiful gifts of nature to make gowns of lamb's wool and belts of straw. If the lady will accept his offer, she will live with him and be his love.

Raleigh's realistic reply takes into account not just the pleasures of nature but its inevitable decay and harshness. His nymph refuses to be lured into the eternal springtime promised by Marlowe's shepherd. Raleigh, though more realistic than Marlowe, does not recognize that there may be compensations with age. He describes only the withering and fading. William Butler Yeats described one compensation well in his "Speech After Long Silence": "Bodily decrepitude is wisdom: young / We loved each other and were ignorant."

These are two pastoral poems, one serious, the other ironic. All the terms of ornament, decoration, sweetness, and simplicity in Marlowe's poem reveal why the pastoral mode is popular: a city person can dream about the country life and make it a perfect dream world--no cares, no work, only springtime and innocence. Raleigh answers the singing shepherd by reminding him that youth will not last, and birds either stop singing or start complaining.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Marlowe talk only about roses, lambs, ivy buds, etc., instead of cold, fading flowers, and silent birds?--His aim is to convince

the lady to come and be his love, and the things he talks about create a much more favorable emotional reaction than the harshness of nature would. He is not interested in a logical argument, only in a convincing one.

2. What is wrong with Raleigh's view of nature? --He speaks of the change from spring to winter, from youth to age, as being only bad. There are joys in life which come only with age, and Raleigh does not grant that possibility.

3. Why are the rhyme and meter so regular in both poems? --To reinforce the lightheartedness and humor.

William Shapespeare: "Shall I Compare Thee" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

A brief description of the Shakespearian sonnet form may prove useful for the study of "Shall I Compare Thee" and "My Mistress' Eyes." Instead of the octave-sestet division common to the Italian sonnet, the Shakespearian form contains four parts: three quatrains containing individual rhyme patterns and a heroic couplet. Its typical rhyme scheme is abab, cdcd, efef, gg; and the metrical pattern is iambic pentameter. The three-quatrain pattern is ideal for the poet who wishes to develop a single thought or emotion through a logical sequence. He may use the couplet to summarize, resolve, or negate the original thought or emotion.

Shakespeare's sonnets vary in subject matter as well as in structural development. Many are personal reactions to love, death, patriotism, and religion. Others are philosophical or satirical comments about time and life in general. Sometimes, of course, Shakespeare took different approaches toward the same subject, which is the case with the two sonnets included in this unit.

Although questions have arisen as to the identity of the person to whom Shakespeare is speaking in "Shall I Compare Thee," it is probably sufficient for our purposes to assume that he is speaking to a woman. Here he praises a woman's beauty in true Renaissance fashion. Her beauty, compared with a summer's day, is far more permanent; it shall not fade but will remain immortal through the poet's verse.

In an attempt to answer the question of the first line, the poet tries to compare his love to a summer's day and finds that it does not work: "Thou art more lovely and more temperate." The first two quatrains elaborate on the inadequacy of "a summer's day" to aptly describe the woman. Lines 5 and 6, "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, / And often is his gold complexion dimmed," suggest the intemperance of summer in contrast to the "temperate" quality of her beauty. Lines 7 and 8 recall and augment the suggestion in lines 3 and 4 that nature will inevitably destroy temporary, seasonal beauty.

But the poet views the woman's beauty as an "eternal summer"; thus she must be compared not to nature but to art: in "eternal lines" she shall not only attain immortality but she shall grow rather than fade "in time." The couplet resolves the question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The answer obviously is "No"; such a comparison would admit her beauty will fade. Only by immortalizing her in poetry can he do her justice.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Line 3 mentions the month of May. What does this line have to do with line 4?

2. What does the word "temperate" mean (line 2)? Is temperance or intemperance suggested anywhere else in the poem?

3. What figure of speech does Shakespeare employ in lines 5 and 6?--Personification.

4. What is meant by the phrase "every fair from fair declines?"

5. The poem begins with a question. How does he answer it? For what reasons?

6. What figure of speech do you find in line 11?

7. Restate line 12 in your own words. How can something "grow to time?

8. What does "this" refer to in line 14?

9. Is the poet bragging in the last two lines? Why or why not?

10. What does the poet finally compare the woman to? Explain your answer,

11. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How many "sections" does the poem seem to have? Each rhymed group of four lines is called a "quatrain;" and the final two lines are called a "couplet." All of Shakespeare's sonnets are written in this form. What function does the couplet serve in this poem--does it summarize what has already been said, does it add something new, or does it contradict what has been said before?

12. Does the poem have a regular rhythm? Is there any variation in the rhythm? How many metrical feet do you find in each line? The rhythm of this poem, too, is typical of the sonnet form--what you have said about this sonnet can be said about any sonnet written in Shakespearian form.

William Shakespeare: "My Mistress' Eyes" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

"My Mistress' Eyes" is included in the unit not only to reinforce the concept of structure in the Shakespearian sonnet but also to help students realize that language need not be romantic and beautiful in order to be poetry. "Shall I Compare Thee" and "My Mistress' Eyes" are, of course, similar in subject matter but quite different in tone and style. Both describe a woman's beauty and express objections to poetic means of describing that beauty. However, whereas "Shall I Compare Thee" suggests that natural beauty is insufficient as a source of metaphor; "My Mistress' Eyes," which describes his mistress in starkly realistic terms, implies that virtually all of the conventional sources of metaphor are ridiculous. His mistress does not resemble nature (neither coral nor snow), art (neither wire nor damask), or a deity ("I never saw a goddess go").

The most common poetic device in the poem is the simile, which Shakespeare repeatedly converts to the negative for the purpose of satire: "My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; / Coral is far more red than her lips' red." In line 4 he renders a common metaphor absurd by the phrase "black wires grow on her head," which is a reference to the Petrarchan convention of comparing golden hairs to golden wires.

Although Shakespeare blatantly satirizes poetic convention, the couplet reveals that his view of his mistress is not uncomplimentary: "And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare / As any she belied with false compare." Though he cannot compare his love to a goddess, she is quite as "rare" to him as any woman described in the terms he refuses to use; and we may infer that he questions the "rarity" of any woman so described.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What type of figure of speech do you find in lines 1 and 2? What makes it difficult to recognize?

2. What does "dun" mean?

3. Look up "damask" in the dictionary. What, then, does "damasked" mean in the poem?--Like a pattern in damask cloth, woven with a pattern in satin on one side. Perhaps Shakespeare refers to rouged cheeks here.

4. What pattern do you notice in the way the poet presents details about his mistress? What do you think his purpose was?--He first mentions a romantic, highly complimentary comparison; then he converts it into a realistic one for the purpose of satire.

5. Why do you suppose Shakespeare mentions a "goddess" in line 11? Does he compare his mistress to a goddess? What reason does he give?

6. Does the poet compliment his mistress in the poem? If so, where?

7. How do the words "belied," "false," and "compare" relate to the rest of the poem?

8. Does the final couplet provide a summary, a resolution, or a contradiction to the rest of the sonnet? Explain your answer.

9. Compare the rhyme scheme and the metrical pattern with those of the sonnet "Shall I Compare Thee."

Robert Herrick: "Sweet Disorder" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

Like Shakespeare's sonnet "My Mistress' Eyes," "Sweet Disorder" is a love poem in which the subject is approached ironically. Whereas Shakespeare distorts the common "ode to beauty" by describing his love in starkly realistic terms, Herrick's approach is unorthodox not only because he suggests that a careless appearance is more appealing to him, but also because he says nothing at all about the lady's person--he focuses solely upon her dress.

Although the poet insists that he delights in disorder, the poem is, on the contrary, very carefully ordered. The organization is much like a well-formed paragraph: the first two lines state the subject in general terms, lines 3-12 support the generalization with specific details (in strict spatial order, proceeding from shoulder to shoelace), and the final lines summarize the author's sentiments on his subject. His concern for order is further revealed by the precise octosyllabic couplets and the regular pattern of punctuation. If form complements subject in this poem, it does so by creating an ironic contrast between the two elements.

Because of the difficulties that 17th century diction may present to the modern reader, the dictionary is an important tool for an accurate study of the poem. Perhaps the inclusion of footnotes with the text would facilitate the reading of the poem, but the student should be able to learn more if he uses the dictionary. "Lawn" is probably the only word that he will find it necessary to look up; but if he is directed to look up "wantonness," "fine," "distraction," "enthralls," ribands," "civility," and "art," he should discover subtle semantic variations and will perhaps be able to suggest, on the basis of the subject, which particular meanings Herrick had in mind. For instance, though "civility" is defined today as "courtesy" or "politeness," its derivation from "civilize" (which suggests the concept of "order") might be considered in relation to the subject of the poem.

Personification and paradox are the most common literary devices at work in the poem. The qualities of a disorganized human being are attributed to virtually every detail of the lady's dress, and students should be led to view personification as a common type of metaphor. Although the term "paradox" is not emphasized in this unit, the phrases "a fine distraction" and "a wild civility" are excellent examples of ideas that seem absurd or self-contradictory but which are somehow tenable.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. How many examples of "sweet disorder in the dress" are mentioned in the poem? What is the subject of the verb phrase "do more bewitch me" in line 13?

2. As this poem was written 300 years ago, naturally some of the words may be unfamiliar to you. Guess at the meanings of "lawn," "ribands," and "stomacher"; then consult your dictionary.

3. The dictionary will tell you the various meanings of "wanton." Which do you think Herrick had in mind in line 2? Why?

4. "Distraction," too, has several shades of meaning. Which do you suppose Herrick had in mind in line 4? The phrase "a fine distraction" seems to be self-contradictory. Can you resolve this contradiction in light of the subject of the poem? Why does the poem use "fine" rather than "nice," "pretty," or some other similar word?

5. How is the phrase "a wild civility" in line 12 similar to "a fine distraction"? Ask your teacher to explain the term "paradox."

6. What is "lace" compared to in line 5? What is "cuff" compared to in line 7? What special kind of metaphor is Herrick using in these two lines? Do you see any other examples of the same kind of comparison in the poem?

7. Check your dictionary for the meanings of "enthralls." Does the word perhaps have two meanings as it is used in line 6? What is the term you learned for such a "play on words"?

8. What specific words, if any, suggest that the speaker of the poem is in love?--Kindles, enthralls, winning, bewitch, sweet, wantonness.

9. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? What are rhymed pairs of lines called? Describe the rhythm of the poem. What regular patterns, besides rhyme and rhythm, do you notice in the poem?

10. How do you think Herrick pronounced "confusedly" and "civility"? --Probably to rhyme with "tie."

11. What relationship can you see between the subject of the poem and the form? Does the poet in any way contradict himself?

Sir John Suckling: "The Constant Lover" (See text in Student Version.)

EXPLICATION:

"The Constant Lover" is a whimsical version of the love poem in which irony is sustained by exaggeration and understatement. In the first stanza the speaker, mock-serious, marvels at his "three whole days" of constancy but suggests in the next breath that he is a fickle, "fair-weather" lover. Stanza 2 implies two things at the same time: that a constant lover is the exception rather than the rule, and that Time shall, indeed, never discover such (or "quite this sort of") a "constant lover." Still understating the case--"no praise is due at all to me"--the speaker's attention shifts from himself to the object of his love in stanza 3. He pays her a considerable compliment in the fourth stanza, emphasizing the notion "Had it any been but she" by repeating the line. However, in the last two lines he rescues himself from seriousness with a gross exaggeration:

> Had it any been but she
> And that very face,
> There had been at least ere this
> A dozen in her place.

The poet appears to be making fun of himself as a lover and of the whole business of love as well.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the poet's definition of a "constant" lover?

2. What is the metaphor in stanza 2? How is the comparison appropriate to the poem?

3. In stanza 3, the speaker says "no praise / Is due at all to me." No praise for what? To whom, then, is praise due? Restate, in your own words, the last two lines of stanza 3.

4. What does the poet mean by the last two lines in stanza 4? Why does he exaggerate in the last line?

5. Does the speaker's tone of voice change at any point in the poem? If so, where? Explain your answer.

6. Would you describe this poem as basically serious or whimsical? Why?

7. What is the author's attitude toward love? Toward himself as a lover? Support your answer by referring to specific points in the poem.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

LYRIC POETRY, PART TWO

Literature Curriculum III

Teacher Version

Teacher Version

Lyric Poetry: Part ~~One~~ Two

Introduction

This unit is designed to make reading lyric poetry a pleasurable experience for ninth graders who at this point in their education are more familiar with narrative poetry. Here they will study a series of poems (most of them lyrics) which reveal different attitudes toward a common theme, the journey. Only by using their imagination will students become taken up with each poem's total journey-experience. But before these young readers can read imaginatively, they must be moved by the poet's use of words. They must have at least a basic understanding of structure before they can even begin to recognize the magic of the verse. It should not be felt that analysis spoils the poem, if the examination is done gradually and only for the purpose of experiencing the complete poem. In fact, understanding poetic technique for that purpose only add to the full enjoyment of the total poetic expression. Handling this approach with common sense, the teacher will not overstress structure and thus make technique an end in itself-- separate from the poem.

A spiral pattern involving structure as well as literary subject and genre will allow increased understanding of literature at each ensuing grade level. Poetry more complex in structure and theme than this unit offers will appear later in the curriculum. For example, the sonnet as a special lyric form might well be studied in the twelfth grade.

Each poem in this unit has been explicated and provided with student questions arranged to identify certain aspects of Subject, Form, and Point of View. Emily Dickinson's "There Is No Frigate like a Book" and Keats' "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" are vicarious journeys demonstrating the joy one experiences in imaginary travel through books. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and "Sea Fever" concern wishful journeys of the past and future. "O Captain! My Captain!" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" consider journey's end while "The Chambered Nautilus," "Song of the Chattahoochee," and "The Noiseless Patient Spider" suggest journeys of nature.

"There Is No Frigate like a Book"

by Emily Dickinson

Explication

Poets try to make fuller use of words than do authors of more practical writing. Often they depend primarily upon the connotation of words. All words are combinations of sounds that have not only dictionary meaning but also overtones or suggestions that go beyond the dictionary level. These overtones, or connotative meanings, come about through the way and circumstances in which certain words have been used in the past. Stallion, for example, is defined as a male horse. But from our readings in romantic literature, we attach other qualities to this word: strength, virility, freedom, wildness, and so on. Emily Dickinson makes full use of connotation when she develops the imagery in the following poem:

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!

The poetess wants us to understand how anyone may quickly and at very little cost take a vicarious journey simply through reading. She uses three brief but convincing images. First, a book is very much like a "frigate." The connotative qualities of this word make the basic comparison exciting. A different type of transportation might have been used, but "frigate" suggests romance, excitement and speed on the high seas. "Coursers" certainly alludes to speed, action, and heroism; "chariot" brings to mind gallantry, Romans sweeping over the plains, conquest, and pageantry.

This poem, typical of her work, is simple in form. The poetess employs unusual language which makes many of her lines memorable. The phrase "to take us lands away" gains part of its interest because "lands" is used adverbially rather than substantively. The first line of the second stanza contains a similar example: the author chooses "traverse" (usually a verb) instead of the more conventional noun "journey":

"This traverse may the poorest take."

The word "oppress" used as a noun in line two of the second stanza makes that line striking. And the use of "frugal" in line six tends to personify "chariot" giving it the human quality of conservativeness. A book doesn't cost much in light of the distant places it can take a "human soul."

The reader moves smoothly and quickly through the poem, pausing only after the first and second stanza.

"There Is No Frigate like a Book"

by Emily Dickinson (see Student Version)

Student Questions

1. Read "There Is No Frigate like a Book" and state what you think this poem is about.

2. How many images can you identify? What kind of travel images does she present?

3. Do you see any difference between the images in the first four lines and the images in the second four lines? In other words, does Emily Dickinson move from the specific to the general or from the general to the specific?

4. Why is the word "frigate" appropriate to represent a book? Why is "coursers" appropriate for poetry?

5. A poet is expected to be accurate. What do you think of the phrase "prancing poetry"?

6. Do you see anything different about the word arrangement in the following:

   a) "To take us lands away"
   b) "This traverse may the poorest take"
   c) "Without oppress of toll"
   d) "How frugal is the chariot"

7. Very little punctuation is necessary in this poem. How does this affect the way it is read?

8. What can you surmise about the author of this poem? Ask yourself such questions as the following: Are her tastes extravagant? Is

she imaginative? Does the poem picture her as a meek, docile person? Find evidence in the poem to support your answer.

9. What is Emily Dickinson's point of view toward books? Recall the imagery in the poem.

"On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer"

by John Keats (see Student Version)

Explication

Keats' "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" clearly demonstrates how well a poet can use the Petrarchan sonnet to develop or intensify a thought. It has a two-part development which correlates its division of form to its division of thought. In the first eight lines (octave) Keats travels through many regions of poetry, finally entering the world of Homer through Chapman. In the remaining six lines (sestet) Keats describes his feeling as that of an explorer discovering a new universe. This basic 8-6 division is typical of the Petrarchan sonnet, and poets use the form to develop particular thought patterns: to question, then answer; to state, then justify; to complain, then console; or to boast, then criticize.

Not all Petrarchan sonnets, however, use such a strict two-part development of content. Sometimes the octave and sestet division is ignored. Wordsworth's "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" is a good example. There is no division of thought. The effectiveness of the poem depends upon the way the sonnet frames the vision of the city in the morning sun, an image situated almost in the center of the poem. Shelley's "Ozymandias" is another illustration of varied form; a major shift in thought does not occur until line twelve.

In Keats' sonnet the metaphor of exploring Homer's "wide expanse" dominates the octave and is effective in communicating a literary experience. It conveys a sense of spaciousness as well as the excitement of exploration. Throughout these eight lines a sense of vastness and movement seems to come through, reflecting a Renaissance feeling for wealth, beauty, excitement and exploration. The connotative qualities of words such as "realms," "states," "kingdoms," "fealty," "demesne," "realms of gold" create this richness. The thrill anticipated in exploring the scope of Homer's epic is illustrated in lines five and six:

"Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;"

The nature of this discovery is positively stated in line eight:

"Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold!"

Although still creating a feeling of spaciousness, the sestet develops a different attitude toward the total experience. Whereas strength and action dominate the octave, meditation and a feeling of silent awe control the sestet. When Keats compares himself to an astronomer discovering a new planet, he establishes a sense of silent, momentary disbelief. In line ten the verb "swim" adds the necessary precision for the simile. When one peers through a telescope, he does not immediately see a clearly delineated planet. Rather there is a moment of focusing and adjusting as the viewer pauses--failing to realize immediately what is happening. Then the planet appears sharply visible. The moment of discovery staggers the imagination.

This poem has constantly expanded one theme: the thrill of discovering Homer. Keats' final simile, a comparison of this discovery to Cortez's (actually of course Balboa's) discovery of the Pacific Ocean culminates the emotional progression. This image becomes the final expression of awe:

> "Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific -- and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise --
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

Balboa may have discovered the Pacific, but the word "Cortez" contained sounds Keats needed to complete his magnificent picture of a "stout" explorer staring "with eagle eyes" at the Pacific from the most eastern part of Panama, the Isthmus of Darien.

"On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer"

by John Keats (see Student Version)

Student Questions

1. How would you explain the fact that this poem divides into two parts? How are they related to each other?

2. To what do you think "realms of gold" refers? "Round many western islands"? "Demesne"?

3. How would you explain line four?

4. What line of the first eight lines indicates more than any other that Keats is employing a major metaphor? What is this metaphor? How effective is this imagery in terms of space and movement?

5. What do terms such as "watcher of the skies," "swims," "with eagle eyes" do to the imagery in the last six lines?

6. Even though Balboa, not Cortez, discovered the Pacific, does this error change the value of the poem? Why or why not?

7. Study the rhyme scheme of this sonnet. Does it in any way contribute

to the meaning of the poem? Explain.

8. How would you describe the development of feeling in Keats' sonnet? What does the final line do to this feeling?

9. Considering the briefness of the sonnet form and the size of Keats' subject, what can you say about Keats' achievement in this poem? Does he successfully fit one to the other or not?

10. How does the poet view Chapman's translation of Homer? What new understandingsand attitudes does Keats have after reading the translation by Chapman? What qualities in this translation helped to bring about these understandings in Keats? What is the significance of Keats' identification with astronomers and explorers who experienced moments of discovery? How does Keats feel now that he too is a "discoverer"?

Explication

"O Captain! My Captain!"

by Walt Whitman (see Student Version)

A President's assassination as seen by a shocked and grieving nation is the subject of Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" In the poem, the nation is the ship and Abraham Lincoln is the Captain. The Captain, in search of a great prize (the preservation of the Union together with the abolition of slavery), pilots the ship to safety and to victory; but the price of the victory is the Captain's life. The first person singular pronoun represents every American made one through a universal grief. The point of view is typical of Whitman, desirous as he was of being the spokesman for all men; the technique, decidedly atypical for this poet, is nevertheless effective, as the study of the poem's form will presently illustrate.

Actually, if no background material were available for this poem, if it were divorced from the poet and his time, this could be a poem about an actual ship and an actual captain. Symbolism would not, then, be a consideration. Ninth grade students should be encouraged to consider the poem in its literal sense first. Nothing is obscure; nothing is unbelievable. Whitman's ship could be any kind of ship on any kind of quest at any time and in any place. Herein lies one of the poem's distinctions, for once the literal meaning with all its possible implications has been explored, students can be easily led to see the symbolic meaning. Perhaps a good approach would be to give them the closing lines from Longfellow's "The Building of the Ship."

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what Master laid thy keel,
What Workman wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee, --are all with thee!

By seeing that the ship in this passage is the nation and by learning about Whitman and his relationship to the Civil War and to Abraham Lincoln, students should be able to see the possible symbolic meaning of the poem. Here is another kind of journey's end and certainly another kind of poem: a President, after guiding his nation through the perils of a Civil War, meets death at the hands of an assassin.

The concern here should not be with the life of Whitman, but students should know that nationalism and democracy dominated his thinking. By serving as a male nurse, he lived through the agonies of the Civil War. His love for Abraham Lincoln was part of his love for America, and he paid tribute to the assassinatedPresident in "O Captain! My Captain!" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

The poem's tensions, of course, reflect the intensity of the feeling within the poet; but the use of antithesis helps convey the feeling of tension which gives the poem its great strength. The joy of victory as the ship nears the port is lost in sorrow because the Captain lies dead. The shouts of the cheering, saluting crowds are dimmed by the really deafening silence of grief. Joy - grief; cheers - silence; national victory - individual defeat: all are found in the poem. The ultimate tension results because Whitman is dealing with the real, not the fictional. On April 14, five days after the surrender of Lee at Appomattox, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. The Union was safe once again; slavery was abolished; but the joy resulting from these victories was lost in the reverberations of the killer's shot.

The poetic form advances the subject. The first four lines of narrative in each of the three divisions are followed by a ballad stanza that cries out the lamentation. In these ballad lines is the burden of grief passing from the initial awareness of the tragedy, through a period of disbelief, and finally to realization if not acceptance of the reality. The first ballad stanza shows the reader "the bleeding drops of red"; but in the second ballad stanza such a tragedy is shown as not being immediately believable: "It is some dream that on the deck, / You've fallen cold and dead." Finally, in lines 20-24, the truth prevails. It is no dream.

The frequent use of the slant rhyme in the first four lines of each division (exulting - daring; bells, trills) adds a discordant note in keeping with the lack of harmony apparent in the events related: the vastness of a President's dedication destroyed by the smallness of the assassin's bullet.

Structurally, the poem is quite intricate and could trap the over-zealous into considering possibilities which are only vaguely defensible. Perhaps such a trap can be avoided if the poem is considered as two quite distinct poems carefully blended into one. Lines 1-4, 9-12, and 16-20 seem complete. Likewise the remaining twelve lines (three ballad stanzas) seem complete. Incorporated as they are into the narrative, the ballad stanzas are used somewhat like a Greek chorus, carrying, as they do, the universal response to the tragedy. The intricacies of the form should not become a burden, but should be considered by ninth grade students whenever such considerations help to clarify the whole.

Student Questions

1. Read the poem "O Captain! My Captain!" and write six sentences telling what you think happens in this twenty-four line poem. You will find it helpful to make your sentences correspond to the six, four-line units that make up the poem.

2. Each of the three stanzas concludes with four lines that are very different in form from the first four lines. What is the rhyme pattern in the second four lines? What is the stress pattern? What kind of stanza could this be called?

3. Longfellow's poem "The Ship of State" concludes with the following lines: (see p. 7).
In this passage, the poet is using the ship as a symbol for the nation. Could Walt Whitman be using the ship in the same way in "O Captain! My Captain!"? Find out when Walt Whitman lived. When did the Civil War take place? Who was the President of the United States during the Civil War? How did Abraham Lincoln meet his death? Do you think that "O Captain! My Captain!" is about Abraham Lincoln? Write a paragraph stating what you think this poem is really about.

4. In answering the second question, you observed the differences in form between the first four lines and the last four lines in each stanza. There are also contrasts or contradictions in the content of the first four lines and the last four. Discuss these differences. The use of such contrasts is a conscious device of the writer known as antithesis, which we can define as an opposition or contrast of ideas. Considering the subject of "O Captain! My Captain!" do you think Whitman's

use of antithesis was wise? How does the difference in form between the first four lines and the last four lines in each stanza together with the use of antithesis contribute to the total effect of the poem?

"Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening"

by Robert Frost (see Student Version)

Explication

Consisting of only four quatrains of vivid description, this poem is deceptively simple. Frost had much more to relate than the mere account of a man pausing briefly to enjoy his neighbor's woods. What he had in mind, however, is buried deeply in the symbolic possibilities of the poem, thus making the selection a very provocative study. This lyric clearly demonstrates that a reader brings his own experience to poetry and comes off with an interpretation at least partially dependent upon this experience. Although readers will generally agree about the basic framework of thought in this poem, their interpretation of particular symbols will vary. On the other hand, the tone of the poem is another matter. No subjective consideration is necessary. Clearly it expresses a nostalgia for the simple and the beautiful that must be left behind. How this tone is achieved can be understood only after a number of elements in the poem are examined.

In the first two quatrains Frost presents several clear, visual images. A New Englander stops to view his neighbor's woods. Precise words ("woods," "home," "village," "fill up with snow") reveal a simple, pleasing scene. The narrator does not explain why he stops. Rather, the author depends upon an old ballad trick of allowing the experience to speak for itself. Only after the account unfolds and comments are made about the horse does the reader infer a possible explanation for the narrator stopping "Between the woods and frozen lake":

> My horse must think it queer
> To stop without a farmhouse near
> Between the woods and frozen lake
> The darkest evening of the year

The dumb animal, insensitive to beauty, questions the stop, thus providing a contrast needed to accent the narrator's sensitivity to natural beauty.

Stanza three continues to develop the basic scene primarily through auditory imagery. The clean shake of "harness bells," the soft sound of sweeping wind" and "downy flake" are pleasurable interruptions of nature's silence. Thus far, the reader sees the narrator pausing momentarily to admire a lovely scene -- nothing more. Frost frames this miniature portrait of a New England landscape by using a simple, four-stressed line (iambic tetrameter) and a closely contrived rhyme scheme. Notice how his rhyme unifies the three stanzas into a composite picture. The last

word of line three in stanza one becomes the rhyme for stanza three;
a a b a / b b c b / c c d c.

Frost could have ended this poem after stanza three, leaving it as a moving little lyric. Instead, he added a final stanza that suggests new possibilities. No longer do the first three stanzas remain on one level. Now, they take on symbolic significance. The first line of stanza four does more than sum up the earlier setting. Connotatively, "dark" implies further meaning, especially when these words are considered in context:

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
> But I have promises to keep
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.

The poem has become abstract. Each reader must reflect upon his own experience to visualize what promises in life must be kept, how far and where he must travel before he sleeps. Moving back through the poem, he must reconsider and attach symbolic interpretations to specific imagery: the horse, the wind, the snow, the darkness. The significance of sleep is generally accepted by most readers as representing something final -- death, for example. The repetition of the final line and the rhyme scheme of stanza four (d d d d) emphasize this suggestion of finality.

Student Questions

1. Where is the narrator and what is he doing?

2. Does he seem to be at home in his surroundings?

3. Why did he stop? Is this clearly stated in the poem?

4. Why might his horse think it queer to stop in this lonely but beautiful spot? What might the owner think about someone stopping in his woods? Does stanza one suggest personality differences of both men?

5. Notice the concrete imagery in stanzas one and two. What do they have in common? How do the concrete words in stanza three differ from those in stanzas one and two?

6. Determine the rhyme scheme of these three stanzas. In what way does it help shape the various images presented?

7. Could Robert Frost have ended his poem with the third stanza?

8. Read the complete poem. What would you say is the attitude of the narrator toward his subject?

9. Study the final stanza. Might the narrator be concerned with more than just the experience of enjoying a lovely natural scene? Notice all the long vowels in this stanza. What do they tend to do to the line? Why is the last line repeated?

10. Now work back through the poem. Might the following words represent something beside their literal meanings: "woods," "dark," "downy flake," "house"?

11. What promises in life must one keep?

12. How do you interpret "asleep"?

13. How far must one travel before he sleeps?

"The Song of the Chattahoochee"

by Sidney Lanier (see Student Version)

Explication

Musicality and richly figurative language make Lanier's "Song of the Chattahoochee" worthy of consideration by ninth grade students. By employing personification throughout the poem, Lanier allows the river to tell the story of its journey from the hills of Habersham through the valleys of Hall until it reaches the sea. All of nature assumes human characteristics and beckons to the river as it seeks to fulfill its purpose. That part of nature which surrounds the river is presented here as the temptress, offering the river pleasure, power, and wealth as more desirable goals than are likely to be realized from following Duty's call.

The reader can move very easily from the world of nature (specifically the river) to the world of man. The river, journeying as it does from source to sea, is a typical life symbol. Man, like the river, journeys through life (birth to death; from the source to the sea) and meets challenges similar to those encountered by the river. In stanza two, physical pleasure seems the temptress; "the fondling grass," "the willful water-weeds," "the loving laurel" offer comforts which will be denied if the "voices of Duty" are heeded. In stanza three, the images suggest the pleasures resulting from power; the hickory, the poplar, the chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine are all strong, powerful inhabitants of the forest. The promise of wealth marks the third temptation. But the beauties of the hills of Habersham and the valleys of Hall do not succeed in luring the river. The call of the sea, Lanier's "lordly main," is stronger than the voices of the temptress. The implication is that the river instinctively follows the call of Duty; the hope is that man will consciously do the same.

The intricate rhyme scheme (a b c b c d d c a b) developed in the first stanza follows throughout the poem and contributes unity. The ninth and tenth lines of each stanza, for example, rhyming with the first and second, enclose the stanzas, each of which, except for the last, is one long sentence, however indefensible the punctuation may be. Repeating the same rhyme scheme at the beginning and end of each stanza throughout the poem unifies the whole.

One of the poet's chief concerns seems to be the creation of sound effects capable of matching the song of the Chattahoochee. The intricate end rhyme is enhanced by frequent internal rhymes as in lines 3 and 8 of each stanza except the fourth.

Alliteration ("hills of Habersham," "flee from folly," "willful waterweeds") and consonance (repetition of consonant sounds within different words in proximity as in line 22, "Veiling the valleys of Hall") contribute to the sound effect. Onomatopoetic words abound: "split," "cried," "sighed." The whole poem, indeed, has an effect resembling onomatopoeia. Sound in poetry, very markedly in this poem, elicits a pleasurable response from the reader, but its significance should not be exaggerated, for all sound effects merely contribute to the whole. Here the poet seems to write a song with words rather than notes as the title suggests. (The poem is excellent for choral reading.) The movement of the river, the nature of each temptation, the firm response to Duty: all aspects of the poem's subject are advanced by the careful attention to sound. The reader hears the river; he feels the enticement of the laving laurels and fondling grass; he moves with the river to its destiny.

Pictured in stanza one as hurrying with a "lover's pain to attain the plain," the river in the fifth stanza, having faced the lures of a lifetime, is certainly a different kind of river. Duty calls it; the sea (death) calls. Students should be encouraged to enjoy the pleasure of discussing points which may not have an answer--at least not within the realm of experience of the average fourteen-year-old. Are love and duty essentially the same? Can duty be a motivating force without love? Does love bring with it numerous, sometimes unpleasant duties? Is slavery the ultimate result of tasks or obligations performed without love? Allow time for exploring such ideas.

Likewise, encourage students to discuss the effectiveness of Lanier's poem. Is the river symbol effective? Does the poem seem to be moralistic? Does the obvious moral detract from the poem?

Discuss Tennyson's "Song of the Brook" included in the Student Version. Here the poet allows the brook to tell its story without forcing the reader to parallel the life of the brook with the life of man. Tennyson's brook takes a journey as does Lanier's river; but in the latter journey, the personified river may seem to lose itself in man whom it symbolizes.

Student Questions

1. The Chatahoochee River rises in Habersham County in northeastern Georgia, Sidney Lanier's home state, and flows southwest through the adjoining county of Hall. To whom or what does "I" refer in line three? What figure of speech is employed when an inanimate object or abstract idea is given personal attributes? List other examples of this figure of speech which you find in this poem.

2. Stanzas in poetry often perform the function of paragraphs in prose. Write five brief paragraphs that relate what is happening in each stanza.

3. Stanza one gives a fairly full description of the path of the Chattahoochee. List specific details.

4. Although the river is singing the song of its journey, the reader can certainly parallel the river's journey with his own life. What is the poet saying about devotion to duty or about facing the temptations of life that call man from his duty? Can you identify the three kinds of temptations presented in stanzas 2, 3, and 4?

5. List the last word of each line in the five stanzas and indicate the rhyme scheme. What effect is achieved by having lines nine and ten rhyme with lines one and two? What effect is achieved by having the same rhyme scheme in each stanza?

6. In addition to the complex end-rhyme scheme, Sidney Lanier introduced rhymes within the lines. This method of achieving sound effects is called internal rhyme. List several examples of internal rhyme.

7. Among the devices the poet uses to achieve musicality is alliteration. Locate several examples of its use.

8. The words "hills of Habersham" and "valley of Hall" appear in the first, second, ninth, and tenth lines of each stanza. Poets use repetition to achieve sound effects and sometimes to advance the action. Can you recall the technical name for repetition which not only repeats something from a preceding stanza but also varies the line and advances the meaning of the narrative? What kind of poem employs this kind of repetition frequently?

9. In the opening stanza, the river is described as hurrying "with a lover's pain to attain the plain." In the closing stanza, duty directs the river toward its goal. Do you think love and duty are basically the same? What motives does man have in performing the duties of his particular state in life?

10. Does the poet seem to moralize or is the poem handled in such a way that the obvious parallel between the life of the river and the life of man does not tend to dominate the poem? If it does dominate, does this seem to weaken the poem?

11. "The Song of the Brook" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson is similar to "The Song of the Chattahoochee" in that the brook tells of its journey as does Lanier's river. Read Tennyson's poem carefully and see if you can discover the basic difference between this poem and Lanier's. Do not concern yourself with obvious differences in form.

"The Chambered Nautilus"

by Oliver Wendell Holmes
(see Student Version)

Oliver Wendell Holmes considered "The Chambered Nautilus" one of his best poems and, indeed, one of his most worthy accomplishments. In discussing this poem, Holmes said that when he wrote it he was filled with "the highest state of mental exaltation and the most crystalline clairvoyance." He felt that he had achieved a close harmony between subject and form and had succeeded thereby in producing a satisfactory and satisfying work.

The life cycle of the nautilus, described in the first three stanzas, becomes the poet's vehicle for dealing with a more complex subject, the life cycle of man.

Because of the poet's careful description, readers form a clear picture of this sea creature called a nautilus (a sailor) because of a belief that it sailed by its gauzy wings which are, actually, its tentacles. The pearl-like appearance of its shell, the purple shades of its gauzy tentacles, and the irised ceiling in its chambered cells adequately describe its color. Likewise, its habits and its habitat are clearly pictured. The unshadowed gulf and the coral reefs welcome the "ship of pearl" during the warmer months.

Adequate though the descriptions are, students will profit from seeing a real nautilus shell, preferably cross-sectioned. (Such a model is often available in the science department, or one may be purchased for a small sum at a novelty store.) Such a cross-sectioned specimen is most helpful when studying stanza three which prepares the reader for Holmes's broader concern. To accommodate its growth, the nautilus builds, each year, a new and bigger chamber. Occupying its "last-found home," it seals off the old cell and concerns itself only with the new. The life cycle of the nautilus is complete when, having built several dozen cells, representing each a year, it frees itself from the shell and dies. The life cycle of man is, the poet suggests, somewhat similar. Man (his soul, not his body, is the poet's concern) should build a more stately mansion as he lives each phase of his life, leaving the low-vaulted past and reaching always toward the freedom of death. To Holmes, then, man's body, like the shell of the nautilus, is a necessary encumbrance which must be shed, first figuratively, then actually if he is to be free. The poet's view of death, if not universally accepted, is certainly generally recognized as possible. Physical death, the leaving of "thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea," marks birth in a new and happier realm.

Students should be allowed to speculate a little. Is Holmes talking about actual death or is he saying, merely, that man has within him the power to transcend his baser nature and become more truly a rational human being? Is the out-grown shell symbolic of the many impediments that hamper man in his search for freedom and happiness? Let them consider what man needs to make him free or what kinds of things make him a slave.

The poetic form provides several points of interest. First encourage students to speculate about what might be happening in the poem. Is the poet walking on the beach, holding in his hand the nautilus shell? Is he by himself? Or is he describing the nautilus to a companion? The first three stanzas which constitute the poem's first structural division might lead to the feeling that the poet is with someone because he describes the nautilus so carefully. But in the fourth stanza, he addresses the shell (apostrophe); and the reader feels, somehow, that the poet is alone. In the fifth stanza, which, together with the fourth, constitutes the poem's second structural unit, he addresses his soul and applies all his observation of the nautilus to his own life.

Another purposeful discussion might involve the "I" in the poem. Do we assume that the writer and the speaker are the same individual or can we consider other possibilities? Although an admittedly difficult problem might arise from such a discussion, students have a chance to grasp several concepts applicable to the study of other selections. Sometimes biographical and historical information is necessary for the understanding of a literary work; sometimes it is not. Historical information, for example, is a concern in the study of Henry V, but biographical information of Shakespeare is not. Biographical information helps with Poe's "Annabel Lee," but historical material is completely unnecessary. Knowing the kind of person Holmes was probably does not enter into the study of "The Chambered Nautilus" and probably would not help to establish the writer - "I" relationship. But the problem needs to be presented and can be at this point if several poems already studied are discussed. In "O Captain! My Captain!", for example, the reader needs to know about Whitman, his love for Lincoln, the Civil War issues, and the tragic assassination of the President. In Emily Dickinson's "There Is No Frigate like a Book," no historical or biographical material is needed. Later, more complex problems, such as literary conventions, semantics, and diction should be introduced.

The five seven-line stanzas have the same rhyme scheme (a a b b b c c) and are moderately rich in figurative language. Alliteration ("Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair," "Stole with soft step its shining archway through") is used frequently and accounts for much of the poetic quality of the work. The final stanza has considerable strength and conveys a sense of urgency, accountable largely to the use of the short, action-filled verbs in the imperative mood (build, leave, shut).

Students should consider the effectiveness of the poem. Does Holmes become too moralistic? Is he convincing? Does the shell-symbol work? There is danger, of course, in stretching the poem too far; but sensitive, intelligent teaching will protect against either a poverty of discussion or an excess.

Student Questions

1. Many poets are close observers of nature and find in nature a source of inspiration. Oliver Wendell Holmes is such a poet. Read "The Chambered Nautilus" carefully and then consider the following:

    (a) What colors does the poet observe in the shell?

    (b) Describe the usual habitat of the nautilus.

(c) What unique habits does the nautilus have?

(d) Why does the poet call the nautilus his "child of the wandering sea"?

(e) What does the poet tell his soul?

2. The poet does not tell you very much about the "I" in his poem, but you are always free to speculate and to form definite opinions which you can defend by specific reference to the poem. With this in mind, answer the following questions:

   (a) Do you think the poet, Holmes, and the speaker in the poem are the same person? Can you defend your opinion by specific reference to the poem, or is your answer mere speculation? Is your understanding of the poem lessened if you do not know who "I" is? On the other hand, would you have understood "O Captain! My Captain!" if you did not know about Walt Whitman?

   (b) Where does the poem take place? Is this a sea coast setting? Or is the setting the writer's study? What other settings might be possible?

   (c) Do you think there is more than one person in the poem?

   (d) What kind of person is the speaker?

3. What is the rhyme scheme in this poem?

4. Much of the poetic quality of the poem depends on the use of alliteration. Find as many examples of alliteration as you can.

5. Consider the poem's structure. Obviously, there are five stanzas, but do you see another logical division in the poem which is determined by the content of the poem and by the attitude of the writer?

6. Do you think the lesson the poet learned from the nautilus is a good one? Should a basketball player try to improve his game each year he plays? Should a doctor hope to be more skillful in his tenth year of practice than he was in his first? Should a student like yourself try to improve each year? In what specific ways?

7. The poet speaks of his soul becoming free when it leaves its "outgrown shell by life's unresting sea." Do you think the poet means to imply that man will never know freedom or joy until after he dies? Or does he imply that over-attachment to the world and the things of the world imprison man's real self?

"A Noiseless, Patient Spider"

by Walt Whitman (see Student Version)'

(In line one, stanza two, other editions use commas around "O my soul.)

The object of Whitman's careful observation is a spider; the object of his deep concern is his soul. Both are difficult subjects for poetry: the spider because it is so unpoetic, and the soul because it is so mysterious, so little understood. But Whitman, unhampered by convention of subject or form, sees much poetry in the spider's journey and learns from it something about the workings of his soul.

Two stanzas comprise the poem: one is devoted to the poet's account of the silent, patient spider as it builds its web from the filament it produces; the other is an apostrophe, an address by the poet to his soul. The spider has not completed its journey, but the poet has completed his observation of it -- thus the past tense is used.

The second stanza--really an incomplete sentence--speaks of something that will happen in the future. Because the poet does not know when or how his soul, "surrounded in measureless oceans of space," will find itself, the incomplete journey of the soul is described in an incomplete sentence. But there are strong indications that the poet has confidence that his soul will know fulfillment. There is a ring of authority conveyed through the use of strong c's in "ductile," "anchor," "catch," "connect." Ductile is a significant word meaning "capable of being drawn out or hammered thin." The soul can do what it must, the poet seems to say.

An example of free verse, this poem has considerably more structure than is at first apparent. In each stanza, one short line is followed by four longer ones which vary somewhat in the number of stresses and succeed in conveying the feeling of motion through the connotative and denotative meanings of the words as well as through the syntax. A series of verbals ("musing," "venturing," "throwing," "seeking,") conveys the feeling of motion, the feeling of potential success. This line is a good example of "cataloguing," a technique which Whitman employs frequently.

Whitman focuses immediately on the spider, putting the object of the verb first instead of the subject I. The poet (I) does not become important until the second stanza. The spider, fragile as it is in appearance, connotes strength.

A spider can kill, can conquer, can build its web by itself, from itself. "Filament" presents the image of something delicate, but the repetition of the word adds strength and helps to convince the reader that the spider has within itself endless resources which will be put to use tirelessly, The soul, too (Whitman's soul and everyman's), stands isolated, but is capable of spinning gossamer threads which will, like the filament from the spider, take hold somewhere.

Ninth grade students should deal primarily with the subject of this poem. The aspects of form mentioned in this explication should be introduced only if the students are sufficiently mature.

Student Questions

1. Whitman doesn't describe the physical appearance of the spider, but he gives the reader a clear picture of its habits and characteristics. List as many of these as you can.
2. Whitman uses the spider's experiences to illuminate the experiences of his soul. Do you feel that the poet is optimistic about the final accomplishments of his soul? Give reasons for your answers.
3. The second stanza is not complete, in the sense that a sentence fragment is used. Can you think why Whitman might have written the stanza this way?
4. Does the poet use end-rhyme? Is there any uniform pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in this poem? Ask your teacher to tell you the technical name given to a poem that has no end rhyme and no specific rhyme pattern.
5. A nursery rhyme which you heard as a child may have helped to color your attitude toward spiders. Remember how little Miss Muffit was frightened by a spider and ran away? Does Whitman's poem have any effect on your attitude toward spiders? Explain.
6. Can you find any words in the poem which, taken out of context, seem harsh or not suitable to poetry?
7. Do you think the repetition of several words has any effect on the total poem? Explain.

"Sea Fever"

by John Masefield
(see Student Version)

Explication

John Masefield's combination of music and meaning in "Sea Fever" captures the age-old yearning to sail the open seas. Three stanzas of moving imagery dramatize the narrator's longing to return to the ways of a sailor. Stanza one, abounding in concrete visual imagery, "lonely sea and sky," "tall ships," "and a star to steer her by," "white sails," "grey mist," "grey dawn breaking," graphically suggest the initial point of the voyage. It captures the thrill of moving out to sea early as the grey dawn breaks.

Stanza two concentrates on audio-imagery, and the reader now is racing across the high seas. Sound is the important appeal in this stanza. The reader hears the "wild call" of the "running tide!" He hears the "flung spray" crashing across the bow and the call of sea gulls slipping or gliding over the ship.

Stanza three, slightly more abstract than the previous two, presents a reflective mood. The narrator recalls the pleasures of the vagabond life of the sailor, of traveling the route of the whales and sea gulls at great speed. "Gulls' way" and "whales' way" are good examples of word pictures. Effectively concrete, they remind one of the Anglo-Saxon kennings in Beowulf. The narrator envisions good comradeship on board, particularly in the evening when the day's work is done, or perhaps after one's turn at the watch is over: "And a quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over." This line suggests a possiblity of being understood on another level, particularly if "sleep" is defined as death.

The meter -- seven stresses, in predominantly anapestic feet -- produces the rollicking rhythm of a sea chanty. Each stanza consistsof a single sentence and contains an a a b b rhyme pattern, thus tending to keep the reader moving rapidly through the poem. Both these elements of form are appropriate for a subject so full of action. The feminine endings (lines 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12) seem to connect one line to the next smoothly. Also, they give the line an airy lightness not unlike the foam of white caps as the ship cuts through the wind like a "whetted knife." These poetic qualities assist in producing the reader's overall emotional reaction: Joy of recalling an exciting life on the high seas.

Student Questions

1. In a few sentences sum up what this poem is about.

2. Read the poem again. What can you discover about the narrator? Is he young or old? Is he still sailing the seas? Is he relating a particular voyage? What phases of a sailor's life does he suggest in each stanza?

3. In the first stanza the imagery appeals to what sense? In the second stanza? How are the images of stanza three different from those in stanzas one and two? To what do these images appeal? Which stanza presents the most general images?

4. The early inhabitants of England (Anglo-Saxons) used compound words, called kennings, in their poetry to create a very condensed picture of what they wanted to say. For example the famous Anglo-Saxon story poem Beowulf has this quality. Its hero Beowulf is sometimes called "wave-splitter" (he was an excellent swimmer), the ocean is called "whale-road," a ship is called "oar-steed." Can you locate any word pictures in "Sea Fever" that remind you of the Anglo-Saxon kennings?

5. Does the last line of the poem suggest more than one meaning? What additional meaning would you give to "sleep"? What does "the long trick" mean? What additional meaning might it imply?

6. Scan the poem. Try to determine the two basic patterns of meter. Read the first line of the poem in a natural manner. Do you read it in the following manner?

   Ĭ múst gŏ dówn tŏ thĕ séa ăgáin, tŏ thĕ lónely̆ séa ănd thĕ ský.

   How many stresses are in this line? Notice the two types of feet: the iamb (∪/), and the anapest (∪∪/). Now see whether the remaining lines of the poem contain seven stresses to each line and a similar rhythm pattern. Which seems to be the more important foot, the iamb or the anapest? Why do you think John Masefield chose this rhythm for his subject?

7. What sort of rhyme scheme appears in each stanza? In stanza one, "shy" and "by" rhyme and "shaking" and "breaking" rhyme. How would you mark them? Does this pattern hold true for stanzas two and three?

8. Sometimes poets will arrange to have an unstressed syllable at the end of a line. The syllable is called a feminine ending. Line three in stanza one illustrates this:

   "And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's
   shaking"

   How many other lines contain feminine endings? Why do you think a poet uses these endings?

9. Read the poem once more. What sort of feeling does it give you?

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree"

by William Butler Yeats
(see Student Version)

Explication

Some journeys are traveled only in dreams. William Butler Yeats tells of such a journey in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." Spending much of his adult life in London and Paris and on the Italian Riviera, Yeats was never spiritually removed from his native Ireland. Frequently he returned, if only mentally, to the land of his youth. The poet himself tells how he was inspired to write "Innisfree." Walking down Fleet Street in London, he saw a small fountain in a shop window. A little ball balanced upon the fountain's jet; and the sound and the sight of water, coupled with the poet's yearning for home, caused him to remember Ireland's lake water, specifically Lough Gill in which was nestled the isle of Innisfree, the setting of many youthful dreams in which he envisioned himself living as Thoreau did on the banks of Walden Pond.

The content of the poem is clear. The poet determines to go to Innisfree and live a simple and peaceful life close to nature, removed from "roadways" and gray pavements. A yearning for simplicity seems the important factor rather than a specific island, although the impression is strong that crowded cities preclude the kind of simplicity and resulting peace the poet seeks. "In the deep heart's core" the song of the lake, really the song of peace, conquers the sound of the city.

Since sound is so important to poetry, the poet explores all its possiblities for communication. The central image in "Innisfree," the one which summons the poet, is the "lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore." On the isle is the song of the cricket, the buzz of the honeybee and, perhaps, the rush of the linnet's wing. Yeats employs a variety of devices designed to make the sound appealing and complementary to the subject. Three six-stress lines (hexameter) with the mid-pause (caesure) followed by one four-stress line (tetrameter) provide a tidal movement, particularly with the use of end-stopped lines with an a b a b rhyme. Infrequent but effective use of alliteration ("a hive for the honeybee," "I hear lake water lapping with low sounds") contributes to the music. Simple language reinforces thought, for it is simplicity the poet seeks, aloneness in the "bee-loud glade." Use of metonymy helps achieve the desired simplicity of language. "Roadway" and "pavement gray" make even London seem unsophisticated.

The peace the poet looks for on his island is described in the second stanza, which is structurally slower, quieter, more peaceful than the first. This is achieved by such lines as "for peace comes dropping slow" in which the consonant sounds are difficult to pronounce without slowing down. The verbs in the second stanza are neither plentiful nor action-filled when compared with those in stanza one. Form and subject are sensitively blended.

Throughout the poem is a kind of sigh, a throbbing from the "deep heart's core," a pulsating like the lapping of the water; but there is a courageous, determined spirit that seems to dominate. "I will arise and go now" bespeaks a brave spirit unbent by disappointment and suggestive of another interpretation of the poem. If biographical material is introduced, the reader will realize that the dream of Innisfree did not become a reality. In this sense the poem is more of a dedication to a value system than an account of the poet's desire to journey back to the land of his youthful dream. The mature poet sees beauty and peace in nature and in simplicity, but not in the artificiality of cities.

Student Questions

1. Innisfree is a little island located in Lough Gill (Lake Gill), one of Ireland's many lakes. As a boy, William Butler Yeats knew of this island. Now, as a mature poet, he is determined to return to Innisfree. What does he plan to do on the island?

2. Yeats depends heavily on sight and sound images to develop his thought. List all the things you see and hear as you read through the poem.

3. Besides telling the reader directly what kind of sounds are associated with his tale (the cricket singing, "the bee loud glade"), the poet uses other devices designed to develop musicality. You have already learned several of these devices in your study of poetry. Identify the figures of speech used in the following:

   (a) "a hive for the honeybee."

   (b) "I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;"

4. What is the rhyme scheme in each stanza?

5. What obvious punctuation difference do you see between the ending of line nine and all the other lines? What determines end punctuation? Ask your teacher to explain the terms "end-stopped" and "run-on."

6. What do you observe regarding punctuation in lines 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11? Read these lines, giving special attention to the punctuation. Your teacher will tell you the technical name for such a mid-pause in a line.

7. How do the first, second, and third lines in each stanza compare in length with the fourth line? Answer this question by counting the stressed syllables. They will be easier to count if you consider the syllable before the mid-line comma to be unstressed.

8. Stanza two talks about the peace and rest the poet hopes to find on Innisfree. Read stanzas one and two aloud several times. See if you can sense the slower pace of stanza two. Can ybu see anything in the structure of the stanza that produces this slower pace?

9. To what do the "roadway" and the "pavement grey" refer? This may be easier to answer if you recall the kind of place to which the poet wishes to go. Obviously, "pavement grey" is only a part of this place which the poet wishes to leave. This is a figure of speech called metonymy. A dictionary will define this term for you.

10. The poet says that he will arise and go to Innisfree. Do you think that he is as much concerned with the place as he is with what he knows he will find there? Explain your answer.